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THE Atlantic

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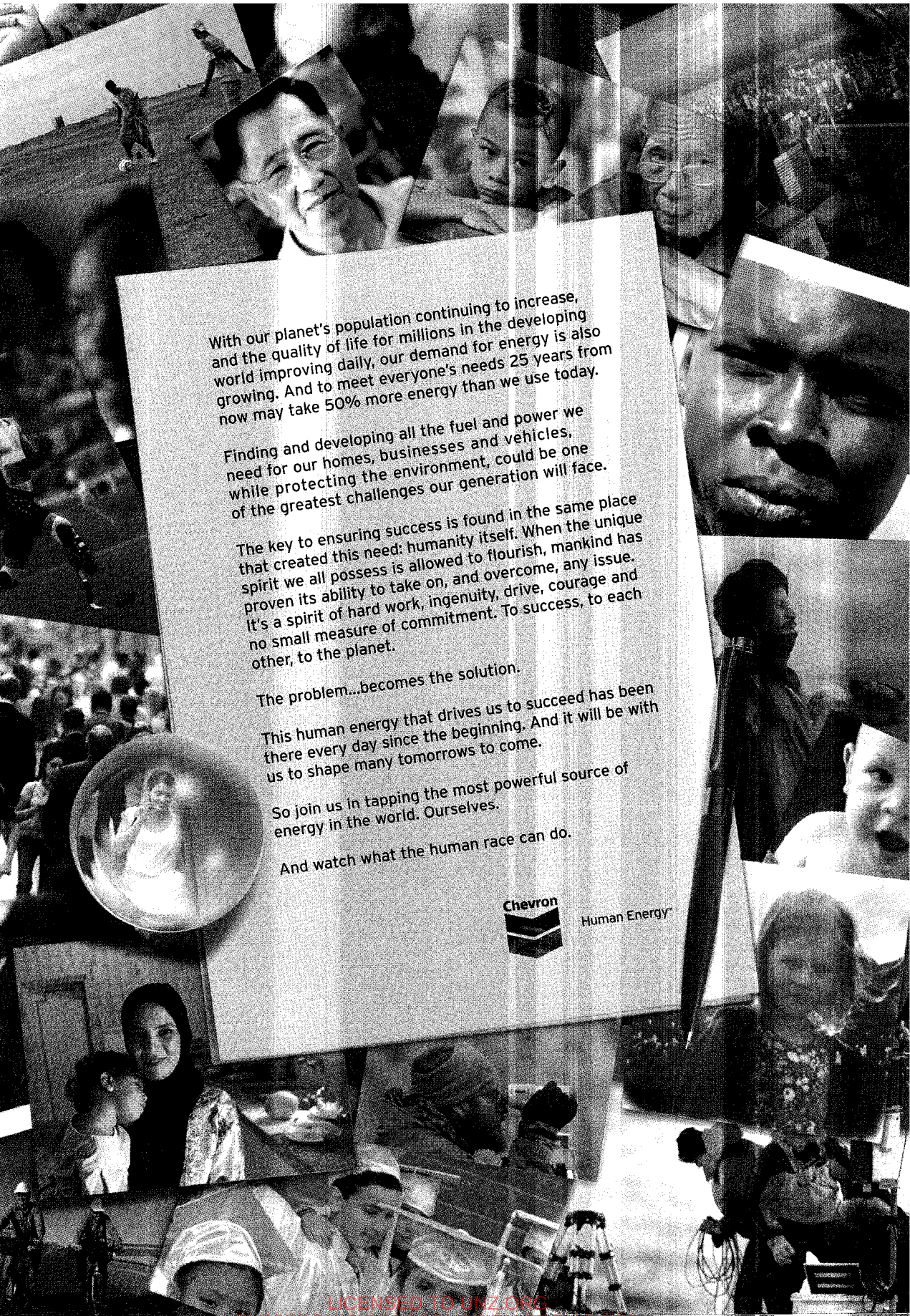
THE CONTEST
FOR AFRICA
by ELIZA GRISWOLD

AMERICA'S
EVANGELICAL FUTURE
by WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

THE COMING
RELIGIOUS PEACE
by ALAN WOLFE



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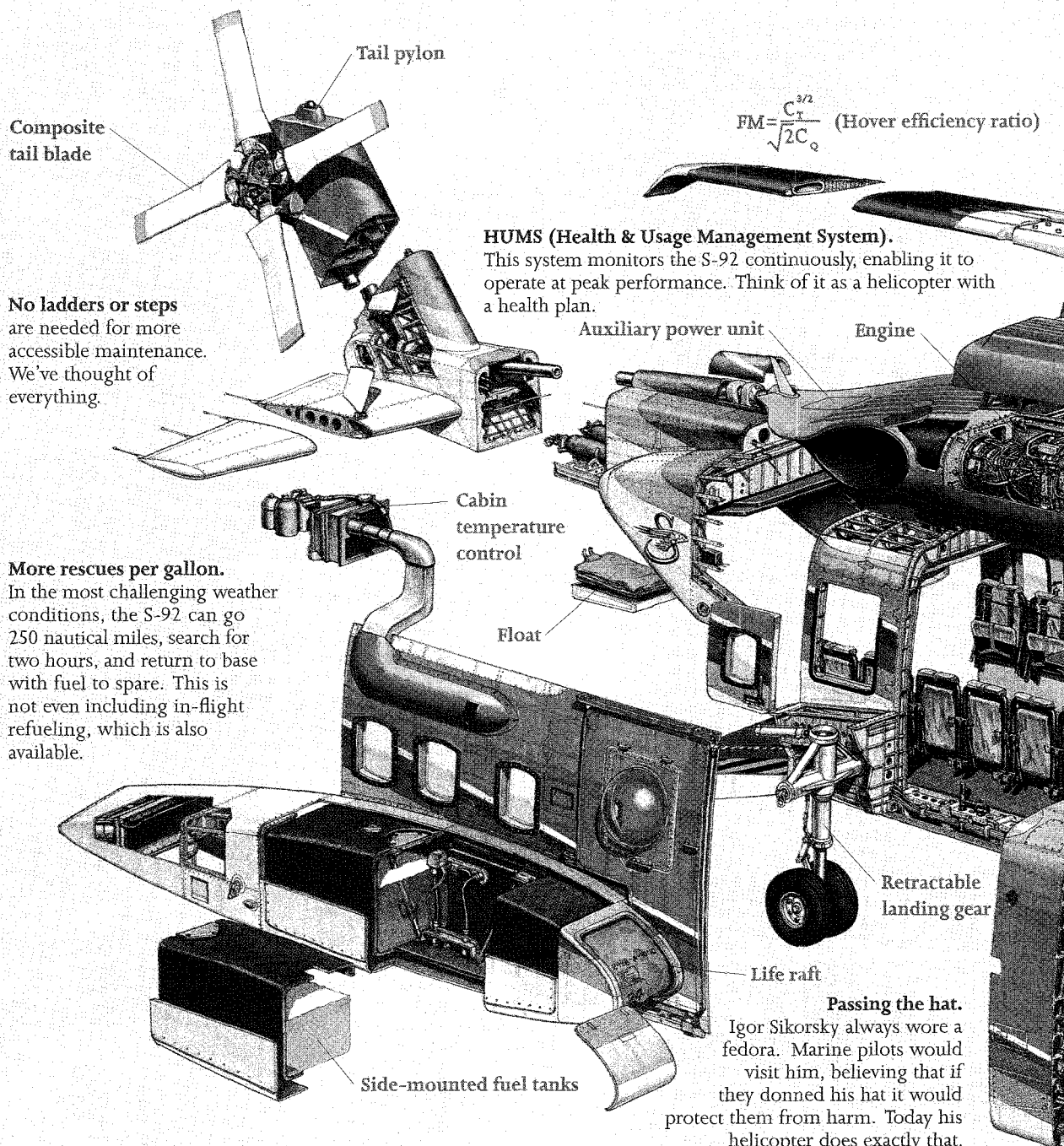
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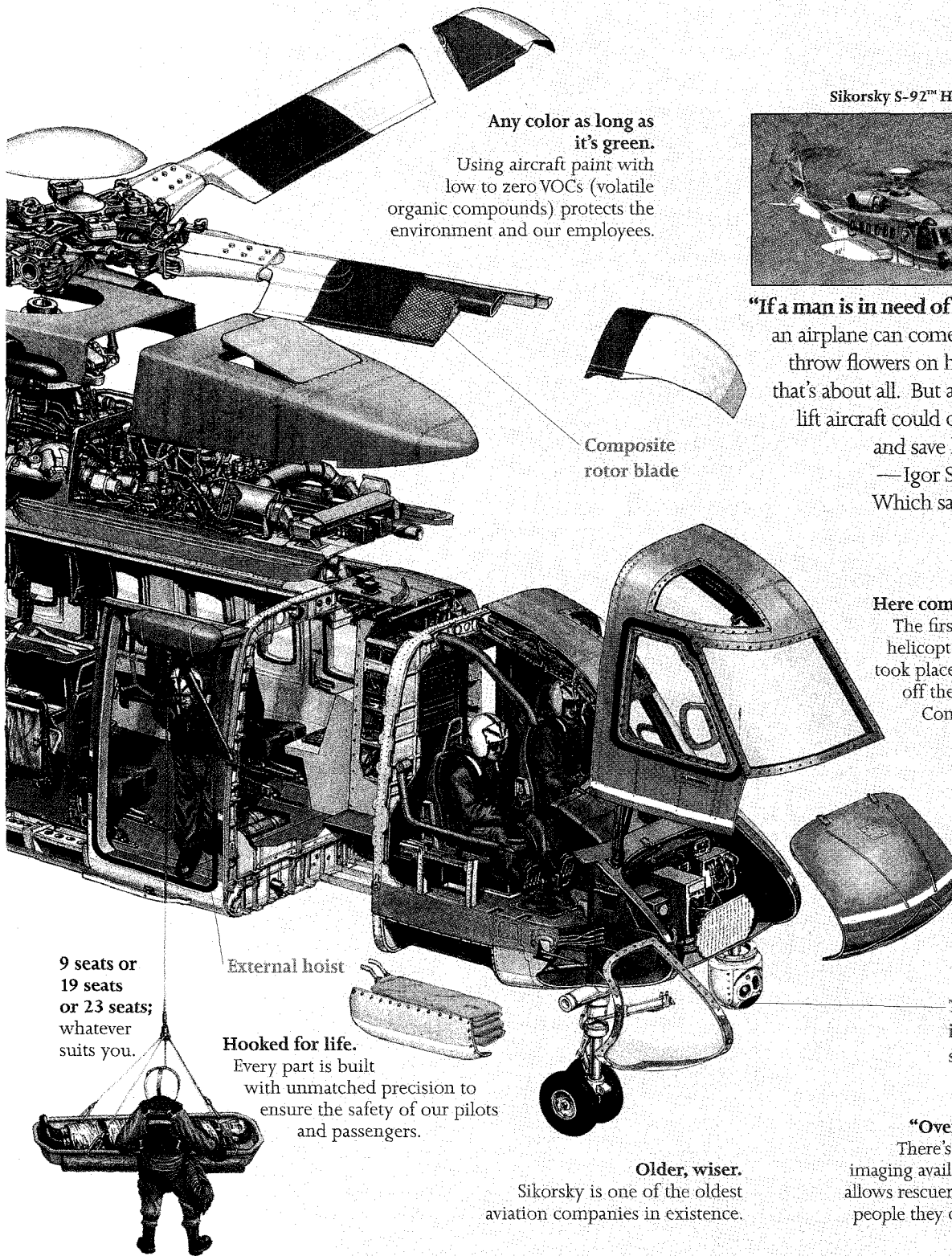
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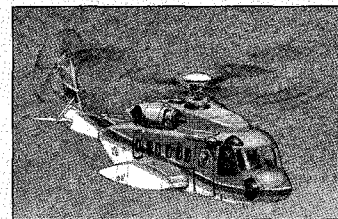
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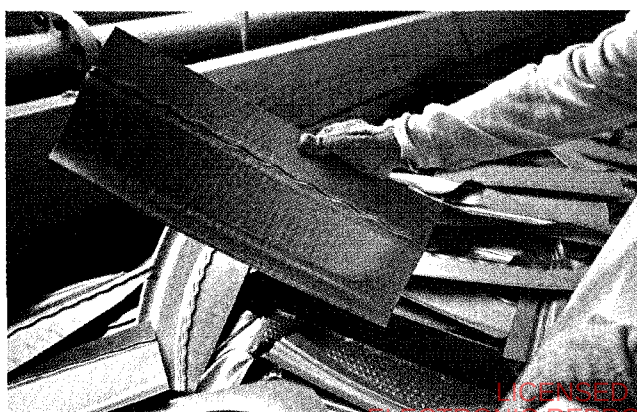
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The Issue in Brief

THE **Atlantic**

MARCH 2008 | VOLUME 301 | NUMBER 2



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HOLY WARS

A child peers through the broken windows of a mosque destroyed during sectarian riots in the central Nigerian town of Yelwa. Eliza Griswold examines the complex roots of the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria in "God's Country."

PHOTO BY SEAMUS MURPHY

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INTERVIEW: NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Lori Gottlieb, author of "Marry Him," discusses parenthood, dating, and the case for getting hitched even if you're not in love.

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Francis X. Rocca, author of this month's Travels piece, narrates photos from his monastic tour of the Valley of the Fallen and from the Escorial, outside Madrid.

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by Istvan Banyai



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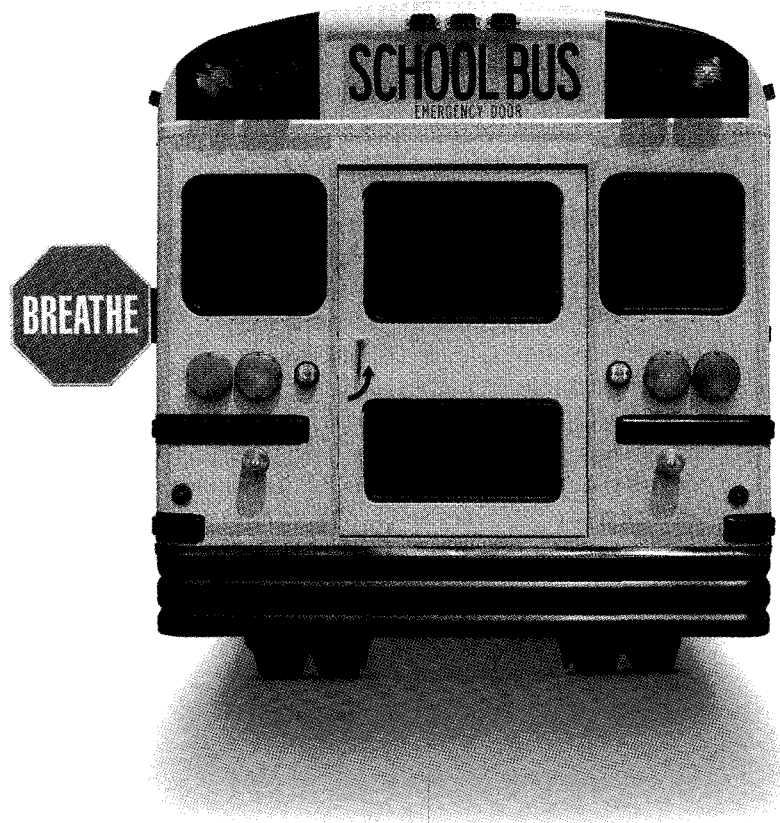
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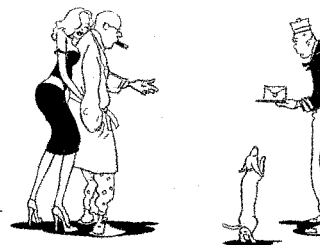
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MARCH 2008 THE ATLANTIC



WHY OBAMA MATTERS

Andrew Sullivan asks ("Goodbye to All That," December *Atlantic*), "How do we account for the bitter, brutal tone of American politics?" His answer is to blame "the biggest and most influential generation in America: the Baby Boomers." As he explains, "The divide is still—amazingly—between those who fought in Vietnam and those who didn't, and between those who fought and dissented and those who fought but never dissented at all."

While certainly interesting, Sullivan's explanation of American polarization ignores the political-science literature on the sources of polarization. Probably the best explanation for the growing divide in American politics comes from Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, who argue that growing economic disparities and rising immigration rates are strongly correlated with political polarization. In their book, *Polarized America* (2006), they show that ideological divisions decreased between 1913 and 1957, when income disparities and immigration rates fell, and that the divisions have increased sharply since the 1970s, as income disparities and immigration rates suddenly grew.

These socioeconomic trends have directly affected voting patterns, with high-income voters tending to back Republicans, and low-income voters tending to support Democrats. Thus, as the gap between rich and poor has increased in America, so has the gulf between the GOP and the Democratic Party. What this means is that the debates over gay marriage and abortion—which pundits all too often blame for today's polarization—have not actually played a significant role in dividing the country.

In short, growing class divisions in the United States are producing growing political divisions. This finding may be disconcerting to a country that

prides itself on its great social mobility and boundless opportunities. But until there is broad acknowledgement of these growing socioeconomic disparities, politics in America will likely remain fiercely divided.

William Bendix
Vancouver, B.C.

Andrew Sullivan's conclusion that Barack Obama is the right man at the right time is based on a premise—"the practical stakes in this election are minor"—that is fundamentally flawed.

Notably, Sullivan's analysis of the two parties' positions on health care is dead wrong. The GOP candidates use tax policy (eliminating or increasing deductions for insurance and health savings accounts) as the basis for their initiatives. The more-comprehensive plans rely on "consumerism" and deregulation, confident that the market will solve the intertwined issues of the uninsured and cost inflation. By contrast, all of the Democratic candidates rely on regulation and government mandates. Each advocates universal coverage, either initially or over time, while strengthening the regulation of insurers (eliminating medical underwriting and exclusions for preexisting conditions) and calling for community rating (premium levels set independent of age, sex, or medical status).

These differences are anything but "more technical than fundamental." They reflect a deep disagreement about the causes and effects of uninsurance and health-care cost inflation, and the role of markets and regulators. Sullivan's conclusion that Obama is necessary may be correct, but not for the reasons he cites. There are real, fundamental differences between the parties' positions, differences that reflect the deep disagreements among Americans.

Joseph Paduda
Madison, Calif.

Andrew Sullivan states that, with Barack Obama's candidacy, "America's soft power has been ratcheted up not a notch, but a logarithm." In fact, logarithms increase far more slowly than the numbers from which they are derived. Is this a subtle deprecation of Obama's abilities, meant to be understood only by those of us with some small knowledge of mathematics?

Derick Ovenall
Wilmington, Del.

THE DOCTOR GLUT?

To support the counterintuitive notion that the United States has too many physicians, Shannon Brownlee focuses on a series of strongly contested conclusions ("Overdose," December *Atlantic*). A large body of research has established the need to expand physician supply, and prominent national organizations, such as the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association, are calling for more physicians to be trained.

Brownlee cites the conclusion of Dartmouth's David Goodman that some academic hospitals, such as those at NYU and UCLA, employ two to three times as many doctors per patient as others. In reality, academic medical centers cluster into two groups. Those in cities like Madison, Wisconsin; Salt Lake City; and Hanover, New Hampshire, use relatively fewer resources, while those in large urban centers, like Newark, Detroit, and Los Angeles, where extreme poverty and affluence co-exist, use more resources, particularly for the poor. Reducing the number of physicians in the latter cities could hardly lead to better care. (Los Angeles, Newark, and similar cities also have more police officers than Madison and Hanover do, but cutting the police force is unlikely to reduce crime.)

Brownlee also cites Elliott Fisher's work concerning the relationship between

expenditures and quality. Like Goodman, Fisher compares the noncomparable. His “high spending–low quality” category consists mainly of these same urban centers—Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Newark, etc. In contrast, his “low spending–high quality” category includes all of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Minnesota, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, and parts of neighboring states. How does one even begin to compare health care, or anything else, in such dissimilar geographic aggregates?

But most troubling is Brownlee’s quote of the Baicker-Chandra paper, which she says reports that “measures of quality ... tended to fall in direct proportion to a rising ratio of specialists.” The Baicker-Chandra model looked at a hypothetical, computer-generated construct that predicts what would happen if a specialist replaced a family physician. Such a scenario never happens in the real world. It’s a statistical game. What happens when the outcomes of real physicians are examined? When states with more specialists per capita are compared with states that have fewer, it turns out that the states with the most have the best quality of care. Nonetheless, Brownlee suggests that “more doctors lead to worse care, and fewer doctors to better care.” This statement is categorically wrong and utterly irresponsible.

*Richard A. Cooper, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pa.*

Shannon Brownlee asserts that the number of doctors being trained in the United States is increasing. That is not the case. While the number of medical-school graduates in the U.S. is increasing, the number of physicians coming out of residency training programs is essentially capped by limits on federal funding for physician training at the nation’s teaching hospitals. The growing number of medical-school graduates in the U.S. will merely displace international medical graduates who now fill residency training slots not taken by U.S.

graduates. Unless the number of training slots is significantly increased—and there are no plans for such an increase—the number of doctors being trained in the U.S. will remain fixed where it has been for more than two decades.

*Phillip Miller
Vice President of Communications
AMN Healthcare
Double Oak, Texas*

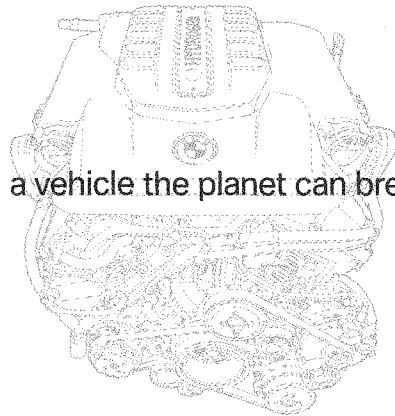
The Association of American Medical Colleges’ recommendation for a 30 percent increase in medical-school enrollment, cited by Shannon Brownlee, was never meant to be a cure-all for what ails the nation’s health-care system. We agree with Brownlee that any plan to improve our current system should include better-coordinated care, enhanced incentives to draw doctors to underserved areas, and a more efficient use of resources. But high-quality health care requires, first and foremost, that physicians be there for the patient.

It has been clear for some time that the United States is not educating enough doctors. The number of medical-school graduates has remained flat since 1980, while the U.S. population has grown by 70 million. To meet the public’s need for accessible health care, our nation has become reliant on physicians who obtained their medical education in other countries, many of which are less-developed nations where health-care professionals are also in short supply. Last year, almost 7,000 foreign-educated physicians entered our health-care system.

An acute shortage of doctors in the United States would have a profound effect on access to health care, including longer waits for appointments and the need to travel farther to see a doctor. The elderly, the poor, and rural residents would face even greater challenges.

The need to build the capacity of our nation’s medical schools is real, and will become more urgent in the decades to come. Any proposal to reform our



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health-care system must address this need to ensure that all Americans have access to the high-quality health care they deserve.

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.
President and CEO
Association of American Medical
Colleges
Washington, D.C.

Shannon Brownlee replies:

Richard Cooper incorrectly characterizes the research I cite as "strongly contested." The groundbreaking work by the Dartmouth group is widely acknowledged and honored, and it offers a robust argument for rethinking plans to expand the physician workforce. During two telephone interviews, Cooper offered no data to suggest that reducing the per capita number of physicians would lead to harm in cities like Los Angeles. His conclusion is based on the assumption that the market has set the number of doctors practicing in such cities in response to levels of sickness. In fact, prevalence of severe chronic illness accounts for less than 5 percent of the variation in the amount of care delivered to Medicare recipients in different regions of the country, one of several lines of evidence suggesting that the physician labor market is not particularly sensitive to the population's actual demand for care. And physicians, unlike cops, are able to generate demand for their services.

Finally, Cooper's characterization of the work of Harvard economists Katherine Baicker and Amitabh Chandra as nothing more than a "statistical game" seems odd, since they employed an analytical technique that is a staple of economics research. Baicker and Chandra asked what would happen if you held the number of doctors steady but changed the ratio of specialists to generalists. Their finding—that more generalists lead to better-quality care—has been replicated in a variety of ways by other researchers.

Phillip Miller correctly points out that increasing the number of graduates without boosting residency slots won't change the number of doctors. The Council on

Graduate Medical Education, which advises Congress on physician-workforce policy, specifically recommends that the number of physicians entering residency programs go up by more than 10 percent in the next decade.

I agree with Darrell Kirch that reducing dependence on foreign doctors is a worthy goal, and that a shortage of physicians would not be good for the nation's health. What we're arguing about here is the definition of shortage. Projections by the AAMC, COGME, and others seem not to take into account the growing body of evidence that too many doctors may be as harmful under our current fee-for-service reimbursement system as too few. A more effective strategy for ensuring our future health might be to reform the payment system; to encourage young physicians to go into primary care and to settle in regions of the country where their services are most needed; and to teach them to practice collaborative medicine. Simply increasing the number of physicians will accomplish none of those goals.

VIETNAM FICTIONS

In his review of Denis Johnson's fine novel *Tree of Smoke* ("A Bright Shining Lie," December *Atlantic*), B. R. Myers flouts one of John Updike's (admittedly rough) rules of literary criticism: "Never, never try to put the author 'in his place,' making him a pawn in a contest with other reviewers. Review the book, not the reputation." Myers begins his screed with an evisceration of *Tree of Smoke* based on others' praise of it—this, after he admits to never having read any of Johnson's other books—and then utterly fails to comprehend Johnson's effort. I also take issue with his disparagement of recent literary history. It seems that he is unaware (or purposefully ignorant) of the last century of American literature, in which crises of meaning were played out on the printed page to wonderful effect.

Jed Cohen
New York, N.Y.

Given that B. R. Myers will no doubt stand alone in his criticism of Denis Johnson, I wanted to send in my thanks

for such a fine polemical shredding of such a perfectly uninteresting book. Myers's conclusion is especially apt. Evidently mainstream America can now take seriously only crude anti-intellectualism, tasteless bad jokes, and shabby writing, even in our literature; little wonder we elect the cynical fools we do. One is reminded of the famous Confucian doctrine of "rectification of names": when language is badly used in a country, everything else will be, too.

Larson Powell
Kansas City, Mo.

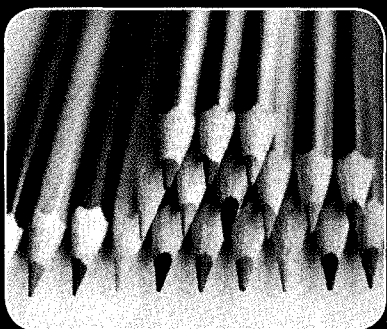
B. R. Myers replies:

I have no idea why Jed Cohen thinks I have disparaged a hundred years of American literature, especially since I praise Michael Herr and Tim O'Brien in the same review. As for John Updike's rules, I am not bound by them. Saying that reputations must never be reviewed would place reviewers above criticism. A bad book is a trivial thing, but to hold up a bad book as good is, as Larson Powell points out in his letter, to perpetrate an attack on values themselves. If other critics don't fight back, who will?

THE GREAT PANDA DEBATE

While James Fallows paints a charming picture of life among the captive giant pandas at the Wolong Nature Reserve ("Among the Pandas," December *Atlantic*), he apparently failed to ask some obvious questions about the Chinese breeding program.

Fallows might have asked, for example, why all those young pandas, many of whom are still on a milk diet because they don't yet have the teeth they need to crush bamboo, are not living with and being nursed by their mothers. The answer is that cubs at Wolong are taken from their mothers when they are only 4 to 6 months old, so that their mothers will cease to lactate and will come into breeding condition again. In the wild, a panda cub stays with its mother for two to three years. The mother teaches the cub how to care for itself and find food. At China's breeding facilities, a cub gets a few short months of motherly care. Then



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the baby is whisked away to be raised by humans, and Mom is artificially inseminated (again) and produces another cub, and the cycle is repeated.

The Chinese are bent on producing as many panda cubs as possible in as short a time as possible. They speak optimistically of releasing these pandas into the wild. Yet these are animals that are raised almost exclusively by humans. The cubs are carried about, played with, hand-fed treats, photographed, and in general, treated like pets. The thought of turning these animals loose to fend for themselves in the wild should make anyone with a conscience cringe. How can any amount of preparation transform such an animal into a wild, self-sufficient creature?

Sandra Parshall
McLean, Va.

James Fallows replies:

Sandra Parshall presents the most familiar criticism of the Wolong Nature Reserve and Chinese panda-protection operations in general. I raised this point with Chinese officials during my visit to Wolong and again, after receiving Parshall's letter, with the U.S. support organization Pandas International. I find their response, which I paraphrase below, more convincing than the criticism:

The Wolong center's main goal is indeed to breed more pandas. By this standard it has been remarkably successful, as my story described. Its efforts have the incidental benefit of increasing the number of animals that can be sent to zoos around the world and later procreate as well. Each surviving panda is a significant addition to a world population on the verge of extinction. Toward this end, Wolong does resort to artificial insemination if natural mating fails. When a mother panda has had cubs for two straight years, she is not mated or inseminated in the third.

At least half of the cubs being raised by human attendants in a Wolong nursery would have died in the wild. Mainly they are the "un-chosen" cubs from sets of twins. (Panda cubs frequently arrive as twins, but a mother is capable of feeding

only one. In the wild, she quickly chooses one to care for, and the other dies.) They also include cubs of first-time mothers that for various reasons do not accept or care for their young. According to Suzanne Braden of Pandas International, the cubs are typically left with their mothers for eight months, not four to six, as Parshall contends.

The biggest contrast between what Parshall says about Wolong and what I saw there involves the preparation of pandas for ultimate release into the wild. Whenever Tang Chunxiang, the chief veterinarian at Wolong, talked about future reintroduction efforts, he emphasized the difference between two groups: the regular breeding population of pandas at the reserve, and the small group being prepared for possible release. The breeding pandas were deliberately exposed to human contact from an early age, so that their attendants could safely deal with them in the future. Pandas being considered for return to the wild were shielded from human contact as much as possible. During my visit, Tang told me that Wolong was preparing a vast, 300,000-square-meter enclosure in which young pandas could live for several years before release, in a setting as close as possible to the wild, while still under the reserve's protection and control. The people who work with the pandas obviously understand that the herds of young animals who interact with trainers every day are not the ones who can fend for themselves in the wild.

RADIO AND DEMOCRACY

Reading Bill McKibben's excellent Rpiece "Radio Free Everywhere" (December *Atlantic*), I'm reminded of how many nights in years past I spent twiddling the AM dial to extract 50,000-watt signals from faraway stations—a lost art now. One thing that's overlooked, though, regarding the shift to digital radio, is the potential for disenfranchising over-the-air listeners. Many rural areas and small communities still lack the broadband access that's a virtual must for reliable online listening, and high-speed Internet can be yet another

utility bill burdening income-challenged households. Web-based listening provides a fine alternative as the AM/FM airwaves become increasingly homogenized, but this trend compromises what radio has always been in this country: a free, easy-to-use public service.

Dennis Divine
Joplin, Mo.

Bill McKibben replies:

What an excellent reminder to all of us to send in our pledges to public radio, and to patronize the advertisers who actually support what's worth listening to on the local dial.

THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER

Robert Kaplan's article on "America's Elegant Decline" (November *Atlantic*) overlooks several salient facts. For instance, Kaplan does not mention that, during the Cold War, the U.S. Navy maintained its size by including large numbers of relatively old vessels in its inventory. One of the budgeting decisions made in the 1990s was to retire many warships ahead of schedule and invest the savings in newer platforms. The result is that the modern U.S. Navy enjoys a higher relative average of quality in its ships than 20 years ago, even if it is absolutely smaller.

Furthermore, the modern U.S. Navy represents a staggering 50 percent of the world's naval combat power. Qualitatively, our margin of superiority is even greater. These are facts that will not change substantially within the next generation, possibly even for two generations. That is hardly a case for saying our Navy is in "decline." What exactly would we do with a 500-ship Navy that we are not already doing with a 300-ship Navy, and incidentally, where would we find the money to pay for it?

Richard Thomas
Washington, D.C.

Robert Kaplan replies:

Richard Thomas makes some excellent points. I deliberately used the adjectives elegant and relative to denote just how tenuous this decline is, adding furthermore

that this decline itself can be "overrated." Yet it isn't just that we have gone down from a 600-ship to a 279-ship Navy; it's that when one considers cost overruns for both big warships like the new destroyers and smaller ones like the littoral combat ship, we may be heading for a Navy in the low 200s or less. There comes a point when quantity matters qualitatively: as powerful as a warship might be, it cannot be in two places at once. As I wrote, we are entering an era in which sheer presence matters more than ever. And in a time of increasing piracy and other low-grade threats, don't discount the value of older ships, which may be just as capable of dealing with such menaces as the most-modern warships.

HILLARY'S CHOICES

Caitlin Flanagan makes it clear that she finds Hillary Clinton inadequate as a woman ("No Girlfriend of Mine," November *Atlantic*), but Flanagan's ideas about women—e.g., they are nurturers who speak fluently about panty hose—appear rather rigid. Her real gripe seems to be that she does not find Senator Clinton feminine enough, which is an old trope by now. Senator Clinton's silence during the Lewinsky affair was not complicity: by choosing not to exorcise her adulterous husband publicly, she demonstrated that she values the privacy of the home. I have a hard time believing that makes her a lesser woman.

Barry Abrams

New York, N.Y.

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

Hillary wasn't silent during the Monica Lewinsky episode; she publicly and loudly blamed the incident on the vast right-wing conspiracy, thus attempting to make a liar—or worse—of a young woman everyone in the world knew was telling the truth. Hillary did what she has always done when Bill has been caught with his pants unzipped: fought to make the woman involved look crazy or stupid or vindictive. Vote for Hillary if you want to; if she ends up as the Democratic nominee, I probably will as well.

But don't try to sell those tired lies about her private life; they only serve to hurt women.

THE GENETICS OF GOODNESS

In "The Selfless Gene" (October *Atlantic*), Olivia Judson takes a step in the right direction, but the question goes much further. At present, two of my students are in India, living with and learning about urban slum children and impoverished village children. Within the limits of their resources, they have given tangible help to people in need, while putting their own health at risk. To me, they are heroes, equivalent to those who join the armed services to defend the nation. "Kin selection" may explain altruism that protects kin, and "parochial altruism" may explain altruism that protects a society or an in-group. Both fail to explain the altruism exhibited by these students. In my life, I have witnessed (directly and through the media) thousands of altruistic efforts like these,

and the historical record multiplies the number many times. I'm not sure such altruism toward out-group members can be reconciled with evolutionary theory, though I fully accept the reality of evolution. Yet we should not try to keep the theory tidy by ignoring or diminishing heroic altruism that reaches far outside the welfare of the in-group.

Donald Attwood

Professor of Anthropology

McGill University

Hudson, Quebec

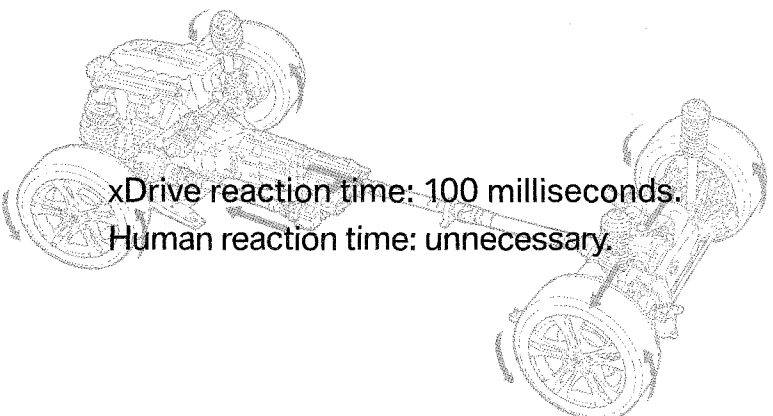
In her search for "The Selfless Gene," Olivia Judson fails to mention that in order for humans to develop an inclination to be generous, even toward non-kin, no gene is required. Humans and other primates are social, and their societies have cultures, which embody and pass on the successful (or, at any rate, nonfatal) behaviors of their members. Judson cites the example of a group of baboons that conveyed to newcomers their relatively



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New in The Library of America

William Maxwell

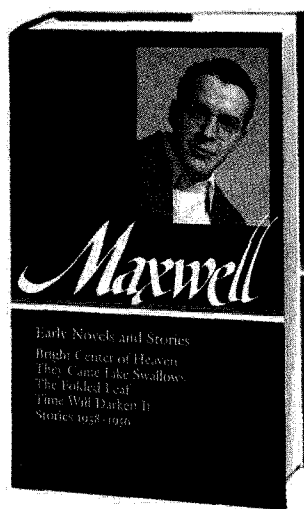
Early Novels and Stories

Christopher Carduff, editor

On the centennial of William Maxwell's birth, this first volume in an unprecedented two-volume edition gathers all the early novels—*They Came Like Swallows*, *The Folded Leaf*, *Time Will Darken It*, and the long unavailable *Bright Center of Heaven*—plus nine masterly short stories.

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—Alice Munro



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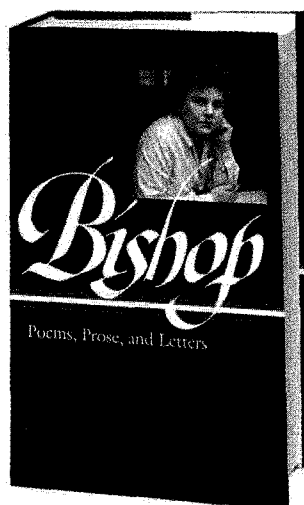
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Lloyd Schwartz, editors

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laid-back standards over a period of 10 years. She notes that 3-year-old human children will learn and enforce the standards of the group. When animals can learn successful behaviors and pass them on to members of their group, then what we have is not Darwinian evolution—evolution through random genetic change—but Lamarckian evolution—inheritance of acquired characteristics. Because humans evolve primarily by passing on what they learn to the next generation, we are freed from the glacial pace of evolution through random genetic change. Judson's own evidence in the examples cited above argues for a Lamarckian evolution of generosity.

Thomas M. Thurston
Oakland, Calif.

Olivia Judson replies:

Thomas Thurston is right in saying that culture can be an important evolutionary force in and of itself. However, he misses the more general point: namely, that in order for culture to evolve, the underlying substrate—the brain—must evolve the capacity both for learning and for a wide behavioral repertoire. The basis of this is genetic. Therefore, for a full understanding of the evolution of human culture, we must also understand the evolution of the brain. I agree with Donald Attwood that kin selection and parochial altruism do not supply a complete explanation for the full repertoire of behaviors that we see today; however, they provide useful frameworks for thinking about how altruistic tendencies may have begun to evolve. One aspect of the flexibility of human nature—which is, to my mind, its most important attribute—is that once the capacity for a behavior evolves, its expression is bound to vary widely.

ADVICE AND CONSENT

Clive Crook mistakenly refers to the borrower of a home loan as the "mortgagee" ("Housebound," December *Atlantic*). That term refers to the lender; the borrower is actually the "mortgagor."

Helen Lewis
Stowe, Vt.

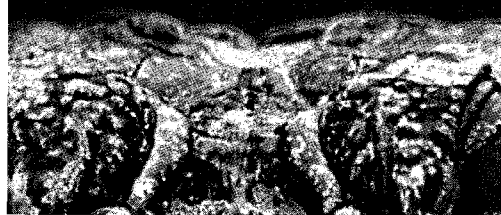
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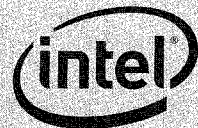
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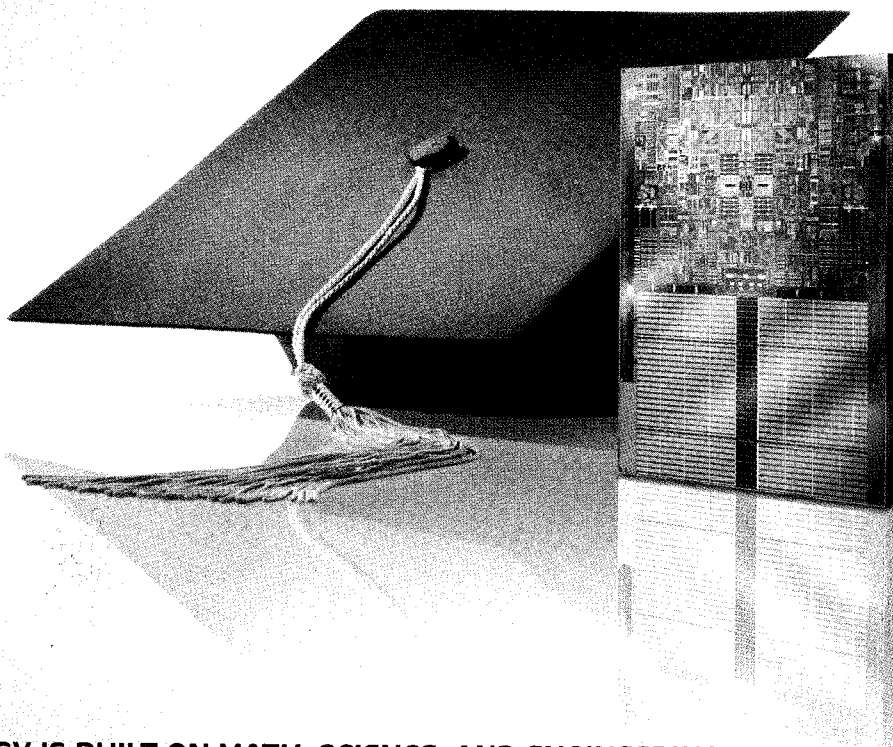
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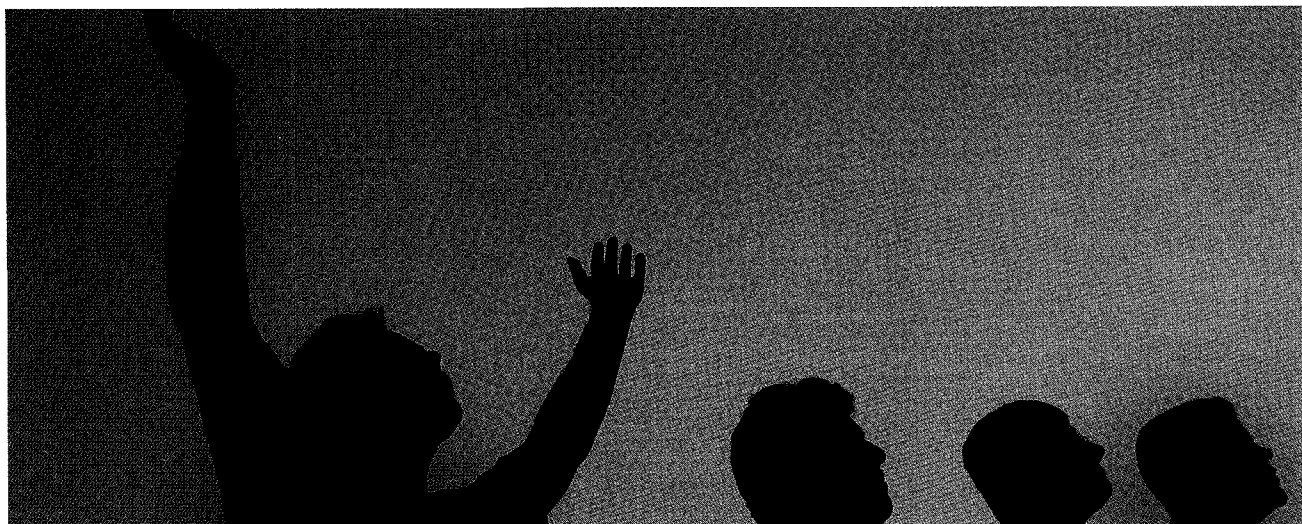
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THE AGENDA

MARCH 2008 THE ATLANTIC



COMMENT

America's evangelicals are growing more moderate—and more powerful.

Born Again

BY WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

Perhaps “values voters” are disillusioned with politics and ready to turn their backs on it. But Mitt Romney wants you to know that liberty is impossible without religious faith. Perhaps an evangelical crack-up is upon us. But Mike Huckabee surged this winter, as Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama did their God-dances in megachurches and at the debates. This political season has only heightened the confusion over the future of religion in the nation's culture and politics. Journalistic coverage of evangelical Christianity has oscillated between confident declarations that the Christian right is dead and horrified discoveries of its continuing influence.

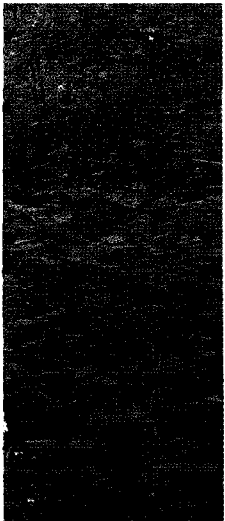
In 1776, Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, a sly and subversive classic of secular humanism too often

mistaken today for a mere lecture on the benefits of capitalism. In it, Smith said relatively little about religion and even less about the United States. Yet he managed to put his finger on the forces that are still shaping the role of religion in American politics today. His analysis is a better guide to the future of the evangelical movement than are most contemporary accounts.

Smith saw what we see: the progress of modernity, he noted, was not undermining religion in the Britain of his day. Instead, religious revivals were blooming. These new religious movements often rejected the liberal values of a free society. They favored absolute moral codes, conservative interpretations of religious doctrines, and political activism to enact their values into law.

Smith observed a relationship between these revivals and the process that we now call urbanization. Young people, arriving in cities in search of work, faced new opportunities and temptations without the structure that village life—with its communities of relatives and others that watched and guided young people—had provided. “A single week's thoughtlessness and dissipation is often sufficient to undo a poor workman forever,” wrote Smith about life in London. But the city's small sectarian religious congregations gave rural immigrants a social-support network and a moral code that could keep them on the straight and narrow as they built new lives. These movements were a response to the dislocations of modernity; there was no reason to expect them to fade away.





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Yet in the teeming religious marketplace of Britain's cities, Smith also saw pressures that would limit the political impact of religious beliefs and prevent theocracy. With so many competing denominations, he noted, religious leaders could acquire political influence only by finding allies outside their own version of the faith—and the process of forming those alliances would drive them toward agendas that could appeal to a wider, multi-faith audience. To be

pluralism and moderation, along the lines that Smith described in 1776. (Indeed, Alan Wolfe argues, beginning on page 56, that worldwide, most religious movements are now on this same path.) Contemporary American evangelicals trace their roots back to the fundamentalist-versus-modernist controversy of the early 20th century, still the key event in American Protestant history. The "modernists" incorporated the ideas of thinkers like Darwin into their

Today's evangelical megachurches offer services to suit every demographic niche and musical preference. Christian hip-hop fills the air in some of them.

American evangelicalism today is flexible, user-friendly, and market-driven. It has its core convictions: that a personal encounter with the risen Christ is necessary for salvation, and that the Greek and Hebrew scriptures offer a wholly trustworthy guide to God's will for humankind. But given those core convictions, this religious tradition seeks above all to be relevant, to be engaged, to reach sinners regardless of their culture, their ethnic background, or their politics.

Today's megachurches flourish in the suburbs of the Midwest and the Sun Belt, reaching audiences that are better educated, more urban, and in many ways more sophisticated than the largely rural, southern fundamentalists of the 1920s. These new evangelicals share many values with their secular neighbors; they and their pastors are reshaping their politics to match. The challenge is not overwhelming. In American history, evangelical churches have been abolitionist and pro-slavery; pacifist and jingoist; laissez-faire and populist. If well-educated, upper-middle-class suburban evangelicals want a "Christian environmentalism," America's market-driven, demand-sensitive religious culture can and will meet the need.

In every way, the evangelical movement in the United States looks as if it is maturing. That means more social and political influence, not less, as the movement broadens, reaches into the elite, and develops messages with wider appeal. Yet it also means a more pluralistic and less strident movement, more apt to compromise and less likely to be held hostage by a single issue or a single party. The real story of the evangelical political movement today involves neither its death nor its triumph, but rather its slow (and ongoing) shift from insurgent to insider, with all of the moderating effects that transition implies. ▀

Walter Russell Mead's most recent book, *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World*, was published by Knopf in October.

Evangelicals are entering the halls where America's future leaders often sit.

politically significant, he wrote, religious extremists had to move toward broader and necessarily more-moderate coalitions. Their entry into politics would, itself, moderate them.

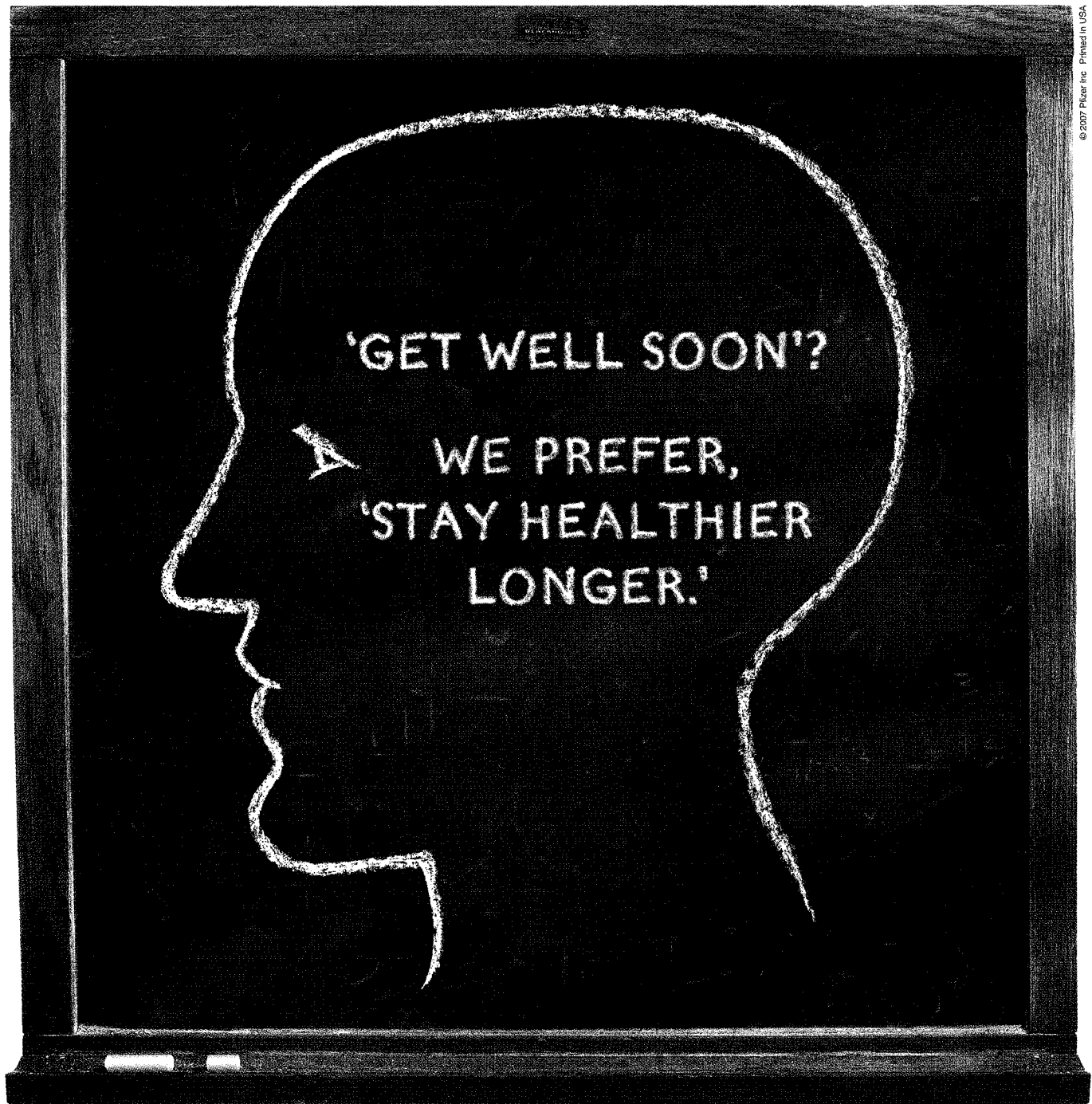
The symbiotic relationship between alienating, amoral modernity and fervent religion can still be seen in the United States today. In a rapidly changing world, strong religious movements and convictions help many Americans cope—and not just the uprooted or the poor. In the coming years, we may well see religious devotion increase among society's elite: admission to top colleges has broadened beyond the handful of feeder schools and legacy families who dominated the process in past generations; the intense competition for top university spots favors adolescents with steady homework habits, harmonious relations with school authorities, and the ability to please adults. A variety of surveys and anecdotes suggest that the freshmen entering colleges such as Harvard, Yale, and Brown these days are more likely to have strong religious convictions than their wilder, less conformist predecessors of decades past. Evangelicals (as well as devout kids from other backgrounds) are entering the halls where America's future leaders often sit.

Yet American religious movements are also still following a path toward

theology, and revised their understanding of biblical authority to reflect new scholarly findings on how, by whom, and when the books of the Bible were written. Their beliefs became the foundation of the liberal or mainline Protestantism common today among many Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians.

In the 1920s, marginalized fundamentalists (so called because they defended the "fundamental" tenets of classic Christian theology against modernist deviations) formed networks of believers and organizations committed to such doctrines as the literal inerrancy of the Bible. Over time, the fundamentalists split again. One group chose to remain "pure"—and, as a result, it remained relatively small in size, and largely powerless. Another group—led by Billy Graham and known today as evangelicals—sought to preserve its orthodoxy while engaging with modern American life; it wanted an orthodoxy that could reach the masses.

Relentless pressure to connect with the public—to get "butts in the pews"—is one reason so many evangelical denominations are so vigorous. It is also why American religion stays close to popular culture. Many evangelical preachers denounced Elvis Presley and rock and roll in the 1950s, but very quickly "Christian rock" became a popular genre.



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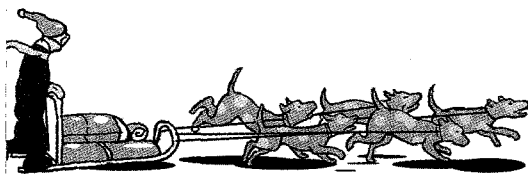
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What to watch for in the weeks ahead Calendar

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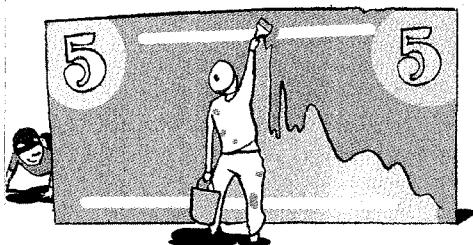
MAR Mush!

1 The Iditarod kicks off in Alaska today. But global warming has made snow harder to find—in recent years, the race has gradually moved north from its traditional route.



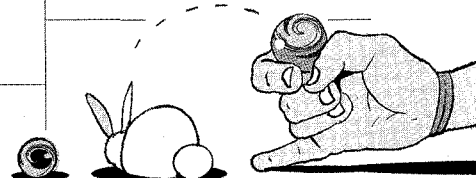
MAR Meet the New Boss

2 Vladimir Putin's handpicked successor is favored in today's presidential election, and has already declared that he'll appoint Putin prime minister. You can bet Putin won't be the typical weak Russian PM.



MAR Honest Abes

13 The \$5 bill gets a splash of color (yellow and light purple!) and some new watermarks today. Originally, the five-spot wasn't going to be redone—until it was discovered that counterfeiters could bleach the bills and remake them as \$100s.

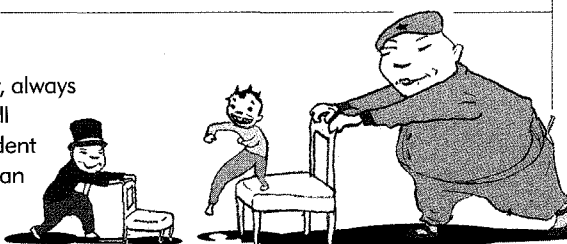


MAR For Keeps

21 The British and World Marbles Championship, held annually on Good Friday, rolls into the Greyhound Pub in Sussex, England, today. Though it's customarily considered bad form to shoot marbles past noon on Good Friday, the rules have been relaxed to accommodate all the mibsters.

MAR Passing the Torch ...

22 Taiwan chooses its president today, always a dicey proposition. Also, voters will consider a referendum seeking an independent UN seat for the island under the name Taiwan (rather than the current Republic of China), a move that many fear will provoke China.



MAR ... and Lighting It

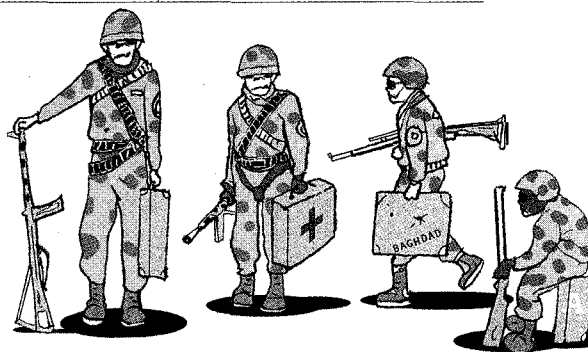
24 The first of the controversies likely to engulf the 2008 Olympics in China could ignite with today's lighting of the torch. Pro-Tibetan protesters will jeer the flame along its route, set to include a trip to the top of Everest. It won't go through Taiwan, though, for fear that letting the torch pass from there to the mainland would reinforce China's claim.



ALSO IN MARCH

Upping the Drawdown

General David Petraeus delivers a report on progress in Iraq and further military withdrawals. Some 30,000 "surge" troops are already set to come home this summer. More could return later in the year, although President Bush has said he'd rather stick with the pre-surge level of 130,000 than risk the progress made since last year.



Taking Aim

The Supreme Court hears oral arguments on the constitutionality of the District of Columbia's handgun ban. The last time the Court made a Second Amendment decision was in 1939, when it banned sawed-off shotguns.

Strong Man, Weak Dollar

It's election time in Zimbabwe, and despite the astonishing exchange rate (30,000 Zimbabwean dollars buys one U.S. dollar) and annual inflation rate (7,982 percent), Robert Mugabe is expected to extend his 28-year rule.

MAR Trial Run

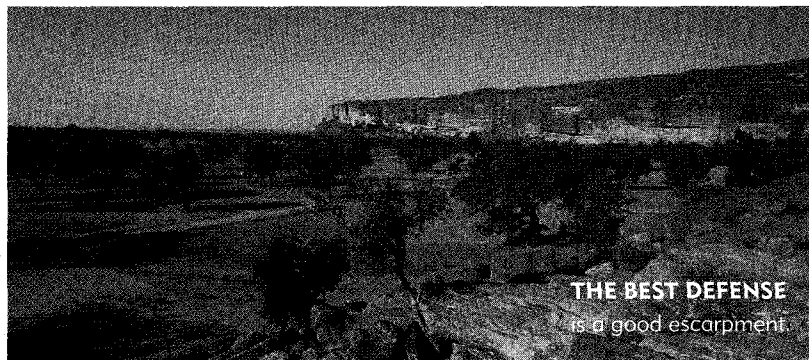
31 Proposed 60 years ago as a permanent world court to try crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court hears its first trial today. Thomas Lubanga, a Congolese rebel leader, is charged with conscripting child soldiers earlier this decade during a military campaign in which his forces allegedly raped, tortured, and murdered civilians.

PRIMARY SOURCES

SOCIETY

Head for the Hills

Good fences make good neighbors, but the best fences make predatory neighbors stay away. In the case of Africa, two economists argue in a recent paper, the fences are natural, and historically their presence may have done the continent more good than harm. Rugged terrain—cliffs, gullies, caves—generally tends to hinder the development of trade and agriculture, and Africa's uneven geography has often been cited to explain the continent's economic struggles. But the paper argues that Africa's terrain limited the economic damage done by five centuries of slave-trading, because the landscape made many areas relatively easy to defend against European and Arab slave-traders who prowled the west coast. In less defensible regions, the



economic impact of the slave trade's relentless raids remains measurable even today. The defensive advantage of hills and crags appears to have been great enough to offset the economic disadvantages of living on uneven land. But though retreating to higher, rougher ground probably improved African fortunes in the past, it may be creating

a less prosperous present—because Africans tend to be concentrated in rugged areas even now, the authors note, rather than in economically more-promising territory.

—“Ruggedness: The Blessing of Bad Geography in Africa,” Nathan Nunn (University of British Columbia) and Diego Puga (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)



SPORTS

Economists 1, Goalies 0

Want to know how to stop a penalty kick? Don't ask the goalkeepers; ask the academics. A group of Israeli economists studied 286 penalty kicks and found that most goalkeepers decide to jump right or left before they can really see where the ball is going. Based on the distribution of kicks, the researchers concluded that the smartest choice would be to remain in the middle of the goal. Why do goalies persistently foul up when they're under enormous pressure to succeed? The economists explain their finding by citing “norm theory,” which holds that people's actions are more likely to be

guided by convention—and the fear of looking foolish—than by pure reason. Adherence to norms typically favors inaction: when facing a choice with potentially negative outcomes, people often prefer to do nothing, on the theory that a harmful outcome looks worse when it's the product of action rather than inaction. In soccer, the authors argue, this pattern is reversed. Goalies would look awfully bad just standing and watching the ball zip by, so they resolve to do something, however irrational the action turns out to be.

—“Action Bias Among Elite Soccer Goalkeepers: The Case of Penalty Kicks,” Michael Bar-Eli et al., *Journal of Economic Psychology*

ELECTIONS

The Eyes Have It

Forget polls and position papers—a glance may be all you need to correctly predict the winner of an election, according to a study by two Princeton University psychologists. In two experiments, undergraduate students were shown the faces of the winners and runners-up in past gubernatorial elections and asked to choose the more “competent” person, based on a gut feeling. (The authors cite earlier research showing that people consider competence one of the most important traits in a politician.) The subjects picked the winner more than 60 percent of the time. In a third experiment—conducted two weeks before the 2006 elections—students picked the winner in 68.6 percent of the upcoming gubernatorial races and 72.4 percent of the Senate races. (Results were discarded when a student recognized a candidate.) Looking longer didn't improve accuracy: students who were instructed to “deliberate” did worse than those who made a decision in two seconds or less.

—“Predicting Political Elections From Rapid and Unreflective Face Judgments,” Charles C. Ballew II and Alexander Todorov, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

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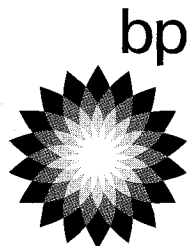
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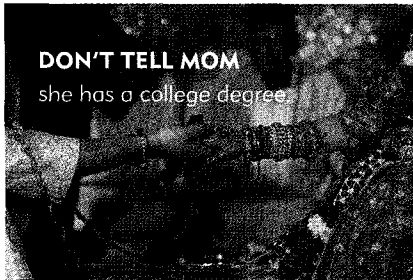
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POLITICS

Safe Seats, Crazy Partisans?

When Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry signed off on a particularly distorted legislative district in 1812, bequeathing the "gerrymander" to American politics, did he lay the groundwork for today's partisan rancor? That's the question three political-science professors set out to answer. Ever-more-sophisticated gerrymandering techniques protect the jobs of incumbent politicians, the usual theory goes, allowing them to ignore moderates and indulge the whims of their most bloodthirsty constituents. Clearly, a seat on Capitol Hill is one of the safest jobs around: in 2002 and 2004, for instance, 99 percent of competing incumbents in the House held on to their jobs; even the Democratic surge in the last election didn't prevent 89 percent of House Republicans from keeping their seats. Yet the professors argue that gerrymandering bears little responsibility for the collapse of bipartisanship. Their analysis of recent congressional voting records shows that polarization has increased nearly as much in the gerrymander-proof Senate as in the House. One of the best explanations for a Congress where most politicians vote a straight party line is simply that political parties are now better aligned with the views of their constituents than they were 50 years ago. Republicans, for instance, have won the loyalty of conservative southerners who used to vote Democratic, and Democrats increasingly represent northeastern moderates who used to support the GOP. The effect of gerrymandering on this kind of "sorting" was approximately zero, the authors found; overall, they conclude that gerrymandering accounts for, at most, 10 to 15 percent of the upswing in polarization since the 1970s.

—"Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?" Nolan McCarty (Princeton), Keith T. Poole (University of California at San Diego), Howard Rosenthal (New York University)



ECONOMICS

Matchmaker, Matchmaker ...

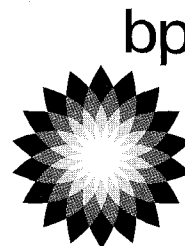
In-laws are a much-maligned bunch. But a new paper by a University of Chicago economist suggests that in India, where families still arrange most marriages, parents who set out to dominate their daughters-in-law exact an economic as well as a personal toll. The study finds that when upper-middle-class Indian parents help select a wife for their son, he is 11 percent less likely to marry a college-educated woman and nearly 20 percent less likely to marry a working woman than is a comparable man who enters into a "love marriage," independent of his parents' wishes. The author, Divya Mathur, used information from an online match-making site and a survey conducted by a market-research agency in Mumbai that quizzed more than 6,000 parents and adult children about their attitudes toward marriage. Mathur believes that the bias against educated and working women stems in part from the way Indian extended families are structured. Studies show that the more education and earning power a woman enjoys, the more control she exercises in the family. But in India, where 82 percent of parents over the age of 60 live with their kids, maintaining influence over household affairs can be crucial for those navigating old age. This reality, Mathur writes, leads parents to "prefer a daughter-in-law with inferior human capital attributes because this allows them to extract a larger share of household resources." The paper suggests that love marriages—which are on the rise, particularly in urban India—may spur economic growth, both by redistributing resources among generations and by providing a greater incentive for women to invest in their own education (because doing so would be less likely to work against their marriage prospects).

—*"What's Love Got to Do With It? Parental Involvement and Spouse Choice in Urban India," Divya Mathur, University of Chicago*

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PUBLIC HEALTH Size Matters

As Americans get fatter, fat women are experiencing progressively worse treatment on the job, according to a new study from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Previous studies had shown that overweight workers face wage discrimination, and that the effect is most pronounced for white women and is smaller (or non-existent) among males and among other racial or ethnic groups. Those earlier findings were mainly historical snapshots, however, and the BLS wanted to determine how Americans' increasing obesity would affect the wage penalty. One might expect that anti-fat bias would diminish, the fatter we all become, but the study reports that increasing obesity is having the opposite effect. Using a

national survey of 12,686 women, the BLS found that between 1981 and 2000, as the percentage of American white women who are overweight and obese expanded from 12.6 percent to 50.4 percent, the wage penalty for obesity nearly doubled. In 1981, a woman in the 75th percentile on the Body Mass Index (roughly 165 pounds for a 5-foot-4-inch woman) could expect wages 4.29 percent lower than those of her svelter colleague in the 25th percentile (roughly 120 pounds). In 2000, the same hypothetical woman's wage penalty for her avoirdupois had risen to 7.47 percent. The fatter we get, it seems, the bigger the premium on thinness.

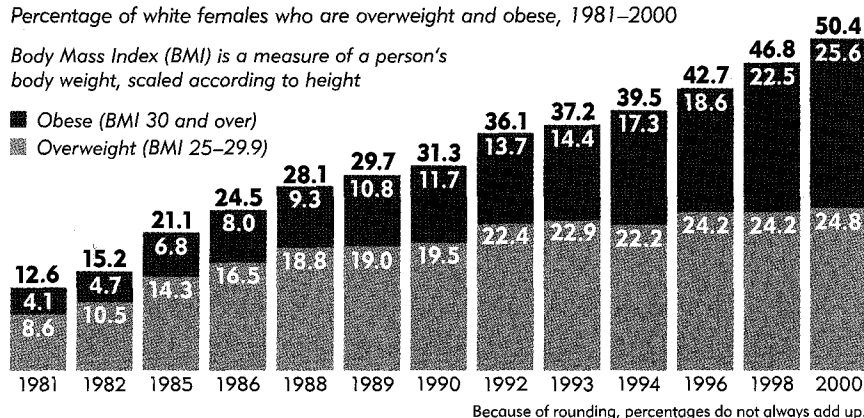
—"Women's Increasing Wage Penalties From Being Overweight and Obese," David Lempert, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Girth of a nation

Percentage of white females who are overweight and obese, 1981–2000

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measure of a person's body weight, scaled according to height

- Obese (BMI 30 and over)
- Overweight (BMI 25–29.9)



PSYCHOLOGY Mortal Thoughts

Nothing concentrates the mind on happy thoughts, two psychologists report, like the prospect of being hanged. The authors seeded the minds of dozens of undergraduates with thoughts of their own mortality by asking them to contemplate their own death. Meanwhile, undergraduate subjects in a second group were asked to contemplate pain, rather than death, by imagining excruciating but nonfatal dental procedures. When the researchers asked both groups to play simple word games, they found that the mortality-haunted students tended to select cheerier words than the students who had been asked to meditate on having their teeth drilled.

(For instance, a death-haunted student would be more likely to turn the prompt "jo_" into the word *joy* than the word *job*.) To the authors, the results suggest that the unconscious mind automatically copes with the prospect of death through a kind of "psychological immune system"—a built-in mechanism to isolate and neutralize the clinically induced memento mori. They note that the results defy the students' own intuitions: the subjects didn't think that imagining their own untimely demise would remind them to always look on the bright side of life.

—"From Terror to Joy: Automatic Tuning to Positive Affective Information Following Mortality Salience," C. Nathan DeWall and Roy F. Baumeister, Psychological Science

HISTORY Up From Slavery

How great a difference would the famous "40 acres and a mule"—the plot of land promised to freed slaves after the Civil War but never distributed—have made to the long-term prospects of African Americans? In a new paper, a University of Michigan economist examines the fortunes of slaves freed after the Civil War by the Cherokee Nation. As Cherokee citizens, these freedmen were granted the right to "claim and improve any unused land in the Nation's public domain." Analyzing farm data from 1880, 15 years after emancipation, the paper finds that a black freedman in a Cherokee community was five times as likely to be a landowner as the typical African American in the former Confederacy. The average black Cherokee man owned livestock worth 80 to 90 percent as much as the livestock of a nonblack Cherokee citizen, whereas the typical Southern black's livestock was worth only 45 to 60 percent as much as the livestock of the average white man. And the data suggest that Cherokee blacks were more likely to make savvy long-term investments: in 1880, 60 percent of Cherokee freedmen farmers had planted peach and apple trees (which take three to seven years to bear fruit), compared with only 5 percent of black landowners in the South. This evidence, the author concludes, vindicates General O. O. Howard, the superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau, who claimed that "more might have been done to develop the industry and energy of the colored race if I had been able to furnish each family with a small tract of land to till for themselves."

—"The Righteous and Reasonable Ambition to Become a Landholder: What Would Have Happened If Former Slaves Had Received Land After the Civil War?," Melinda Miller, University of Michigan

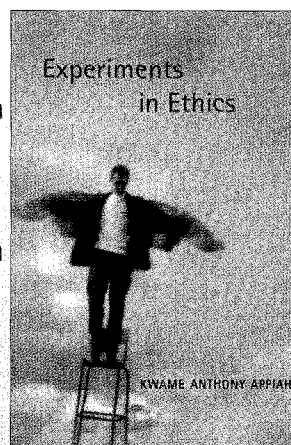
For links to the documents discussed in this section, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/primarysources.

EXPERIMENTS IN ETHICS

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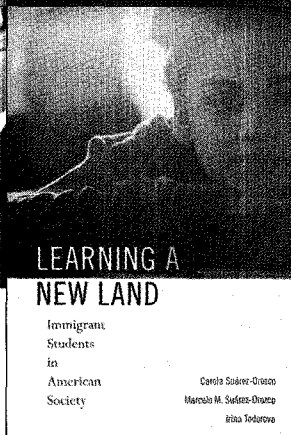
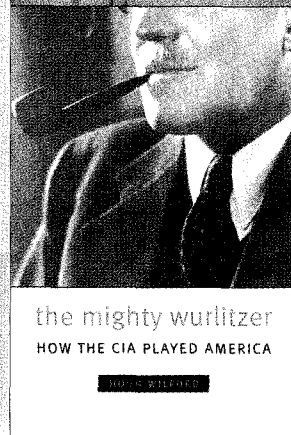
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LEARNING A NEW LAND

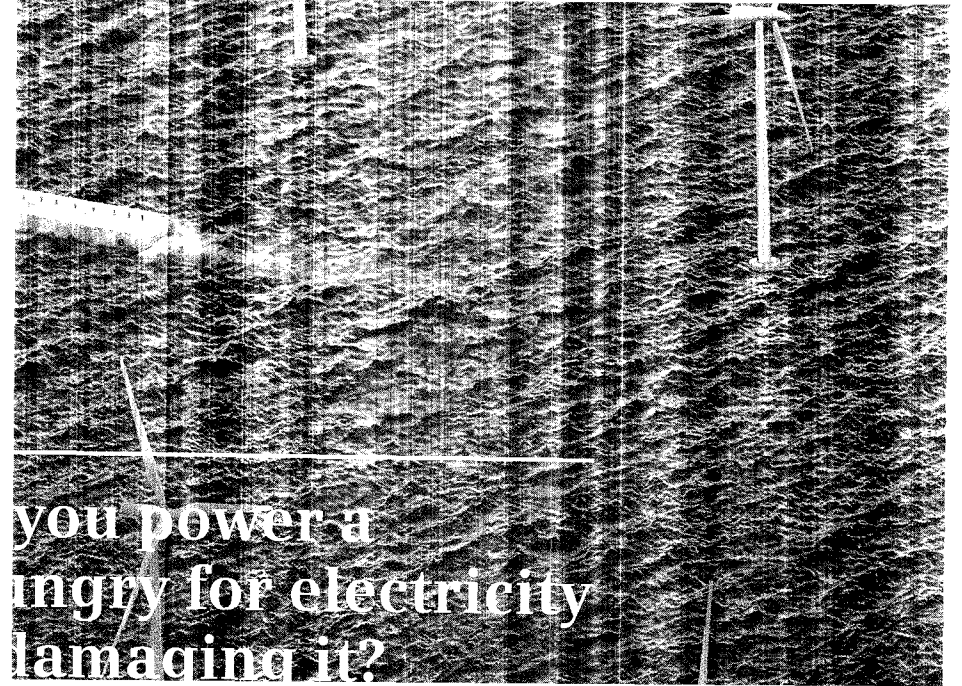
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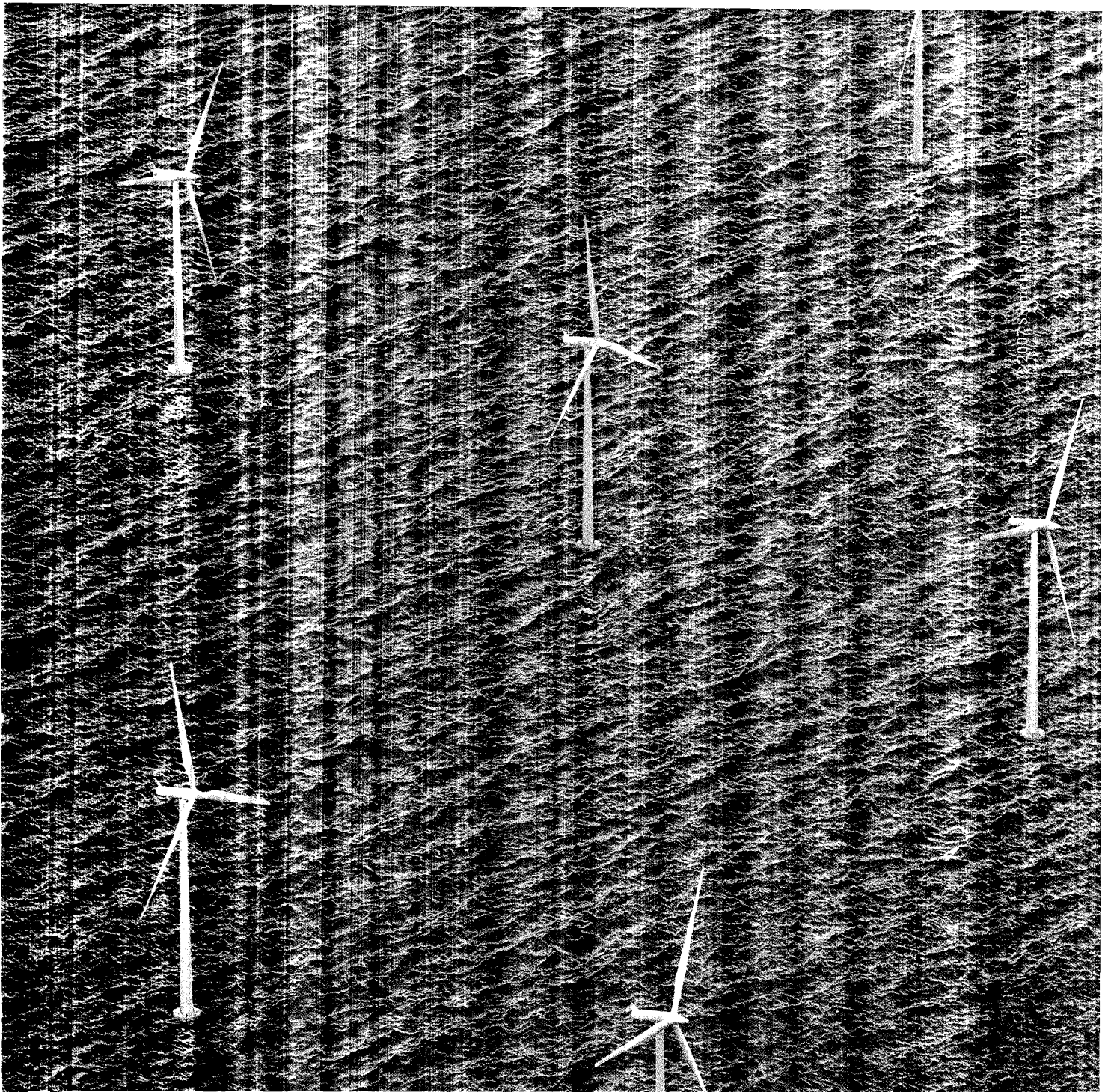
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POLL

THE END OF HISTORY

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about the prospects for democracy around the world.

Q: Worldwide, is liberal democracy stronger or weaker than it was in 2000?

73% WEAKER

"The third wave of democracy stalled in the new millennium, partly as a result of the successes in the previous decade and a half (notably in Europe and Latin America) but partly as well because of flawed U.S. policies—not least by giving democracy promotion a bad name."

"The deepening of democracy in Mexico has been impressive. But China remains firmly authoritarian, Russia and Venezuela lead the list of countries that have embraced strongmen, and the democratic revolutions in Georgia, Lebanon, and Ukraine have foundered."

"No country wants to look like Iraq."

28% STRONGER

"The U.S. may not like the outcomes, but there have at least been more experiments with democracy since 2000. The election of Hamas, the elections in Iraq, the demands for elections in Pakistan, the agitation in Burma, the awareness of election fraud in places like Kenya—all of these represent some kind of ferment whose outcome and implications are not yet clear. But [they do not represent] complacency about the absence of democracy."

"Democracy is stronger in Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, the new European Union countries, and parts of the Caucasus than it was in 2000."

Q: Is the U.S. capable of meaningfully affecting the prospects for democracy in most nondemocratic states?

68% YES

"The Bush administration has given democracy a bad name. The U.S. can't impose democracy or insist on democracy; it can only carefully support indigenous democrats (sometimes by staying far away) and the aspiration of human beings to live a better life. Most important in supporting the democratic impulse, the United States must ensure that it stays true to that impulse in its own deeds, not just its words."

33% NO

"The U.S. can nudge nondemocratic states to head in a democratic direction by providing political and economic incentives. But the U.S. has little direct leverage over the domestic developments that decisively determine the character of a state's government."

Q: Do you believe the proliferation of democratic government is inevitable in the long run?

63% NO

"Nondemocratic governments will show considerable resiliency for the foreseeable future. Indeed, they may well outperform democracies on key issues of economic growth and governance."

"Not being a Marxist, I don't think any historical development is inevitable. We seem to have forgotten that democracy is an organic phenomenon—that ... it is the outcome of specific histories, cultures, ethnicities, and events, fused together over ... time. We do not simply add water, as so many of our foreign-policy elite would have it, and get George Washington."

"Nothing is inevitable in foreign affairs. New models quite far from Jeffersonian democracy (China's 'Market-Leninism') could begin to catch the imaginations of transitional societies."

38% YES

"Despite the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, people who are free to choose (as Mrs. Thatcher said) do choose to be free. And the information revolution enables more people to see lives in free countries."

PARTICIPANTS (40): Ken Adelman, Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Stephen Bosworth, Daniel Byman, Warren Christopher, Richard Clarke, Ivo Daalder, Douglas Feith, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, John Hamre, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, Laura Holgate, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Robert Kagan, David Kay, Andrew Krepinovich, Charles Kupchan, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Edward Luttwak, John McLaughlin, Richard Myers, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Paul Pillar, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Wendy Sherman, James Steinberg, Shibley Telhami, Jon Wolfsthal, Anthony Zinni. Because of rounding, percentages do not always total 100.

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THE NATION IN NUMBERS

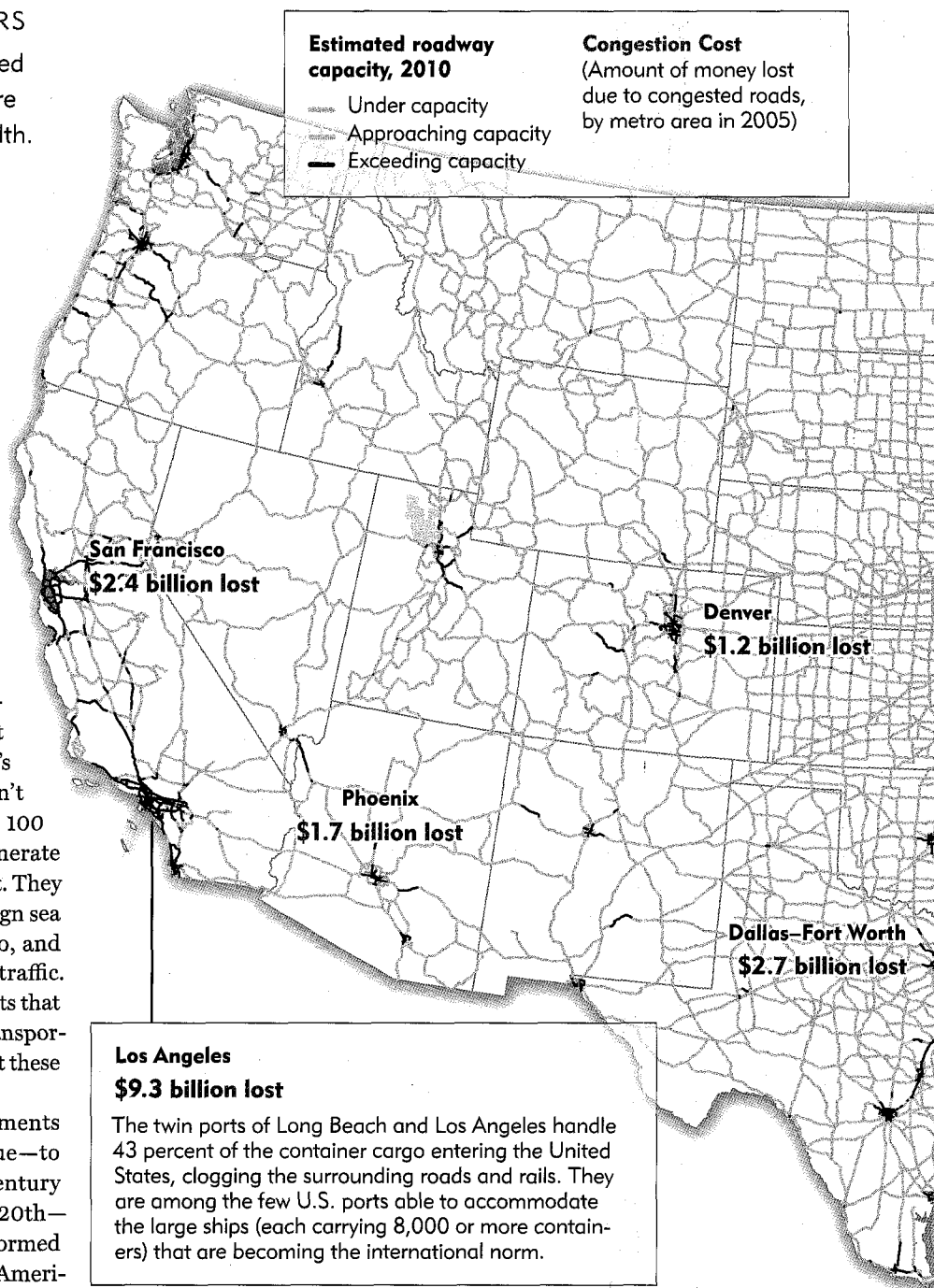
America's aging and congested road, rail, and air networks are threatening its economic health.

Clogged Arteries

BY BRUCE KATZ AND
ROBERT PUENTES

Transportation spending is spread around the United States like peanut butter, and while it's spread pretty thick—nearly \$50 billion last year in federal dollars for surface transportation alone—the places that are most critical to the country's economic competitiveness don't get what they need. The nation's 100 largest metropolitan regions generate 75 percent of its economic output. They also handle 75 percent of its foreign sea cargo, 79 percent of its air cargo, and 92 percent of its air-passenger traffic. Yet of the 6,373 earmarked projects that dominate the current federal transportation law, only half are targeted at these metro areas.

In the past, strategic investments in the nation's connective tissue—to develop railroads in the 19th century and the highway system in the 20th—turbocharged growth and transformed the country. But more recently, America's transportation infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth and evolution of the economy. As earmarks have proliferated, the government's infrastructure investment has lost focus. A recent academic study shows that public investment in transportation in the 1970s generated a return approaching 20 percent, mostly in the form of higher productivity. Investments in the 1980s generated only a 5 percent return; in the 1990s, the return was just 1 percent.



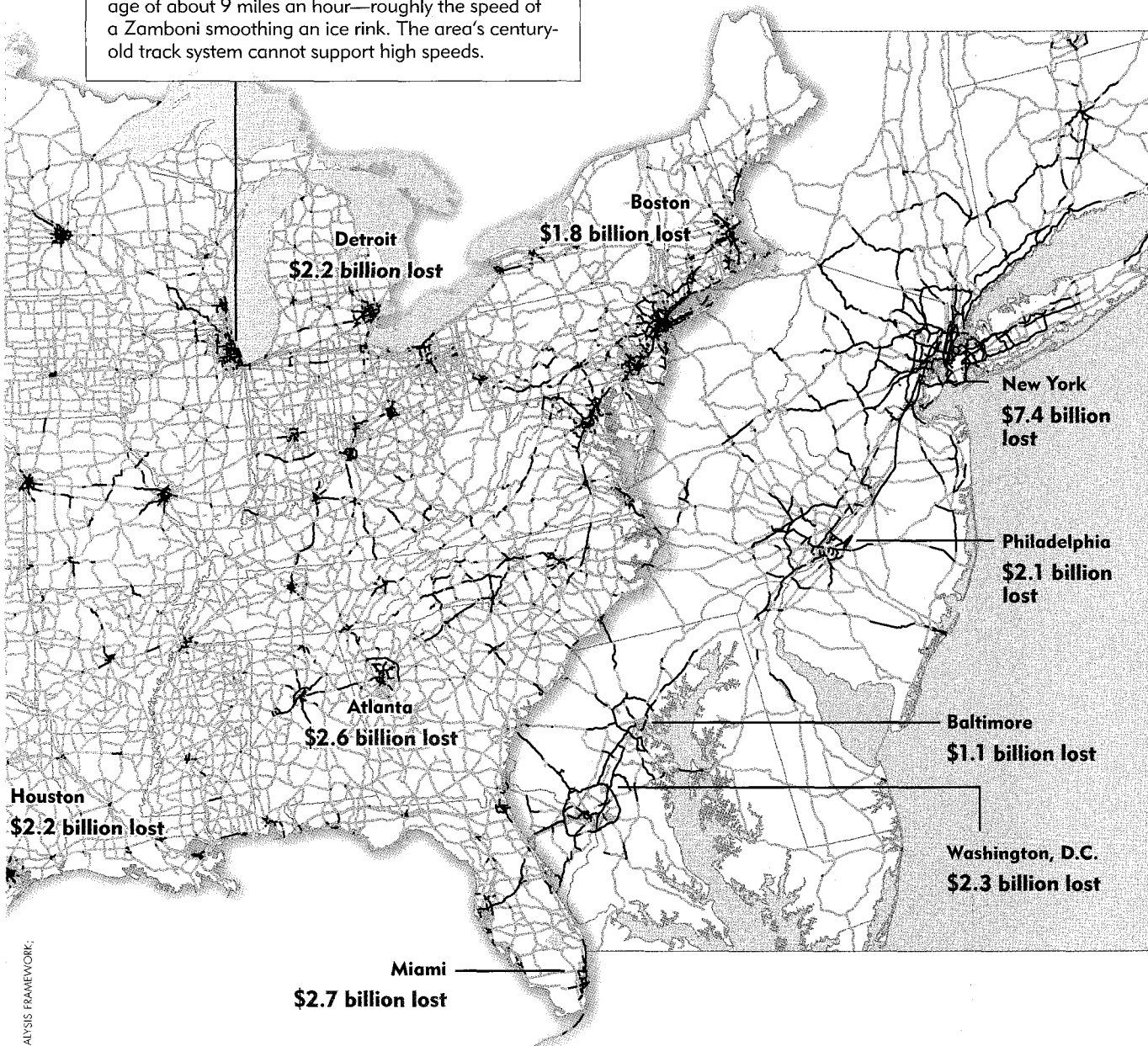
The map above shows an estimate of road-traffic congestion in 2010. In most major metro areas, it is steadily worsening. The cost of congestion, including added freight cost and lost productivity for commuters, reached \$78 billion in 2005. Half of that occurred in just 10 metro areas.

America's biggest and most productive metro regions gather and strengthen

the assets that drive the country's prosperity—innovative firms, highly productive and creative workers, institutions of advanced research. And the attributes of some cities are not easily replicated elsewhere in the U.S. The most highly skilled financial professionals, for instance, do not choose between New York and Phoenix. They choose between New York and London—or Shanghai.

Chicago
\$4.0 billion lost

A third of the nation's rail and truck cargo goes to, from, or through Chicago. The 500 freight trains that cross the metro area each day crawl along at an average of about 9 miles an hour—roughly the speed of a Zamboni smoothing an ice rink. The area's century-old track system cannot support high speeds.



SOURCES: FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION FREIGHT ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK; TEXAS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE; MAP BY RYAN MORRIS

While many factors affect that choice, over time, the accretion of delays and travel hassles can sap cities of their vigor and appeal. Arriving at Shanghai's modern Pudong airport, you can hop aboard a maglev train that gets you downtown in eight minutes, at speeds approaching 300 miles an hour. When you land at JFK, on the other hand, you'll have to take a train to Queens, walk over an

indoor bridge, and then transfer to the antiquated Long Island Rail Road; from there, downtown Manhattan is another 35 minutes away.

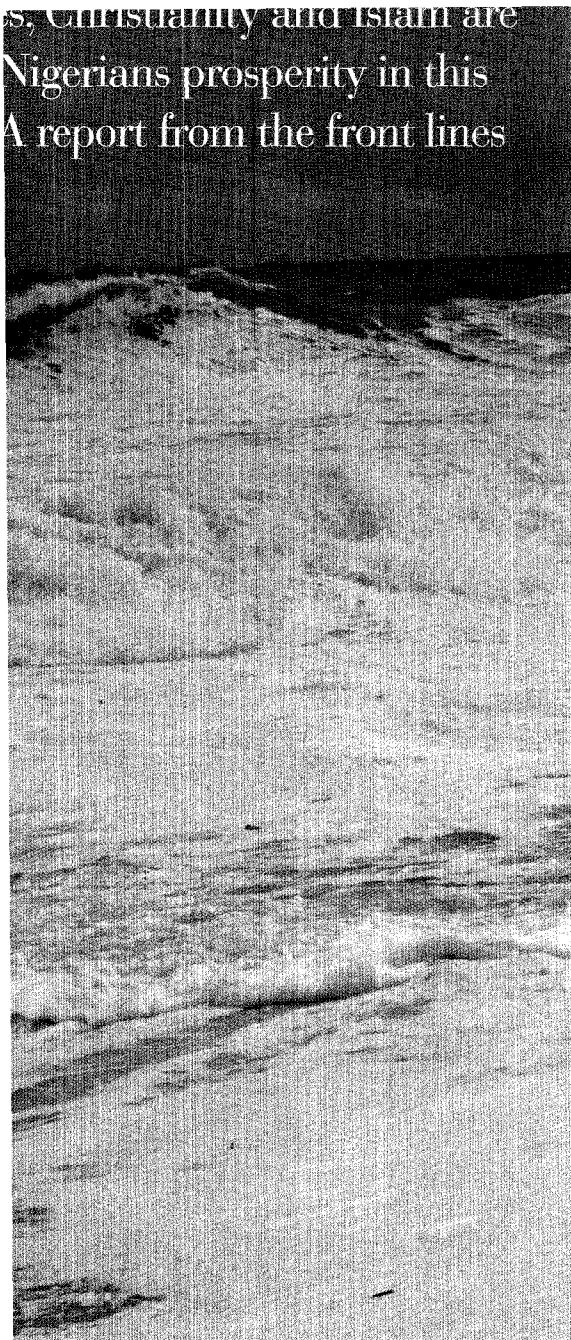
To power our metropolitan engines, we need to make big, well-targeted investments that improve transportation within and around them. Above all else, that means taking a less egalitarian approach to our infrastructure: there

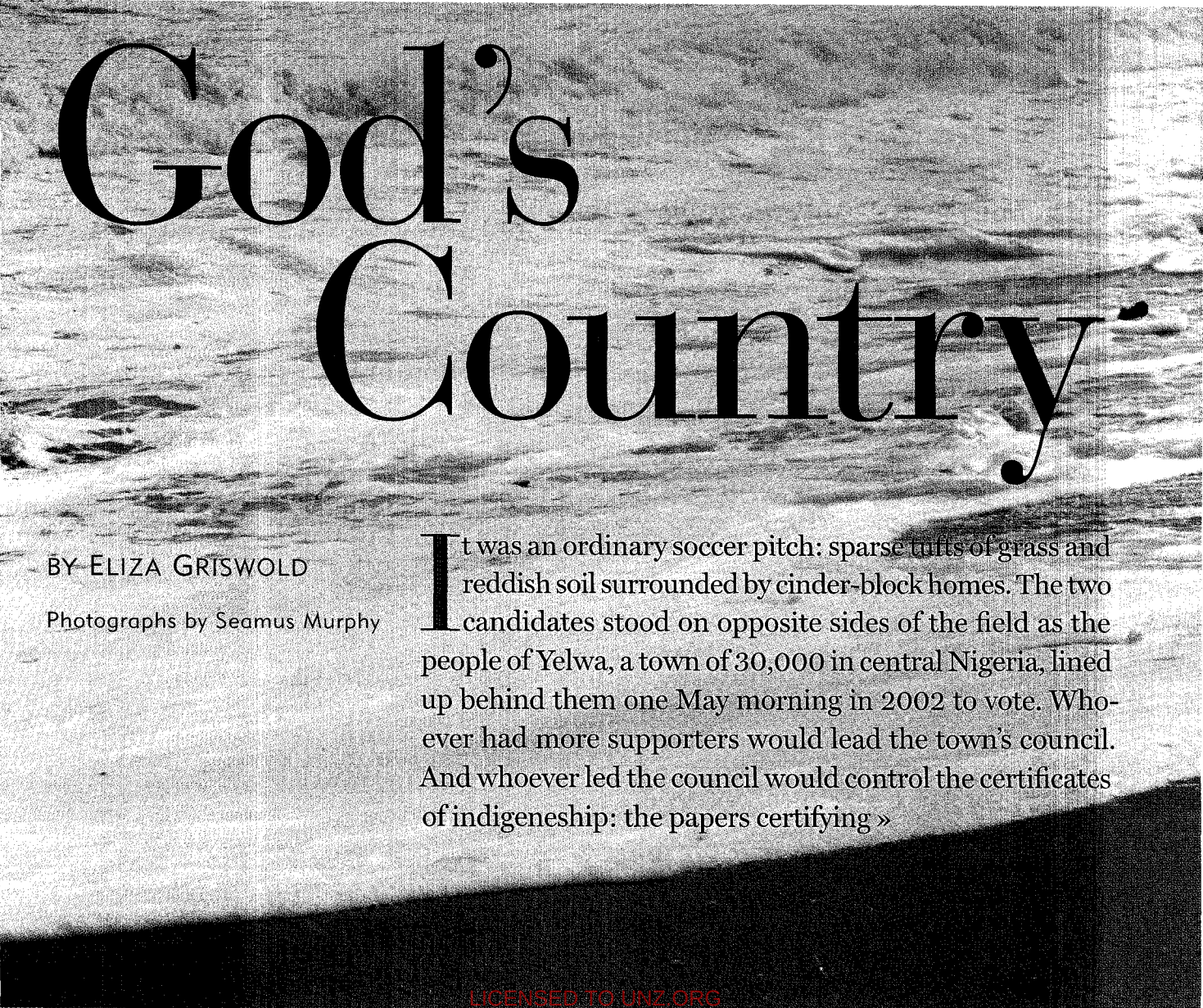
is little justification for making small improvements all over the place.

In a post-agricultural, postindustrial, innovation-dependent economy, the roads to prosperity inevitably pass through a few essential cities. We should make sure they're well maintained. ▀

Bruce Katz is the director of the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program. Robert Puentes is a fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program.

s, Christianity and Islam are
Nigerians prosperity in this
A report from the front lines





God's Country

BY ELIZA GRISWOLD

Photographs by Seamus Murphy

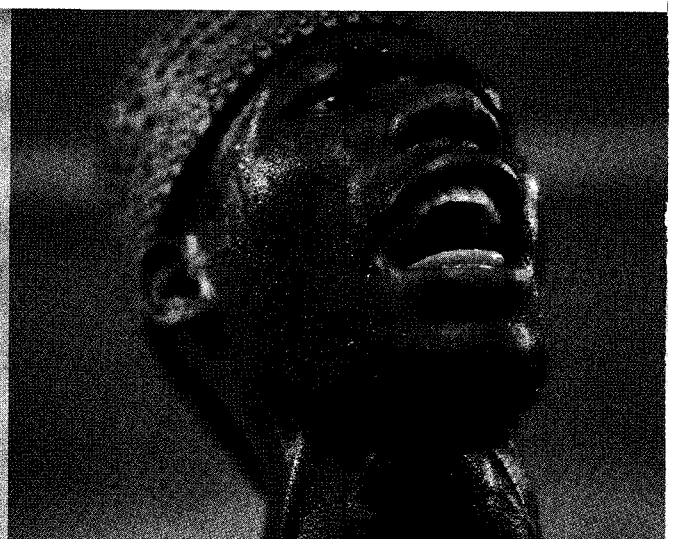
It was an ordinary soccer pitch: sparse tufts of grass and reddish soil surrounded by cinder-block homes. The two candidates stood on opposite sides of the field as the people of Yelwa, a town of 30,000 in central Nigeria, lined up behind them one May morning in 2002 to vote. Whoever had more supporters would lead the town's council. And whoever led the council would control the certificates of indigeneship: the papers certifying »

that Yelwa was their home, and that they had a right there to land, jobs, and scholarships. Between the iron goalposts milled ethnic Jarawa, principally Muslim merchants and herders; next to them were the Tarok and Goemai, predominantly farmers and Christians. For several years, their hereditary tribal chief, a Christian, had refused certificates of indigeneship to Muslims no matter how long they'd lived in Yelwa. Without the certificates, the Muslims were second-class citizens.

As the two groups waited in the heat to be counted, the meeting's tone soured. "You could feel the tension in the air," Abdullahi Abdullahi, a 55-year-old Muslim lawyer and community leader, said later. A tall, thin man with a space between his two front teeth and shoulders hunched around his ears in perpetual apology, he was helping to direct the crowd that day. No one knows what happened first. Someone shouted *arna*—"infidel"—at the Christians. Someone

Tarok and Goemai. But Pastor Sunday, like many others of his faith, felt that Muslims were trying to wipe out Christians by converting them through marriage. "It's scriptural, this fight," he said. So he and the other elders decided to punish the women. "If a woman gets caught with a Muslim man," Sunday said, "she must be forcibly brought back." The decree turned out to be a call to vigilante violence as patrols of young men, both Christian and Muslim, took to the streets. What eventually transpired, in the name of religion, was a kind of Clockwork Orange.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with 140 million people (one-seventh of all Africans), and it's one of the few nations divided almost evenly between Christians and Muslims. Blessed with the world's 10th-largest oil reserves, it is also one of the continent's richest and most influential powers—as well as one of its



spat the word *jihadi* at the Muslims. Someone picked up a stone. "That was the day ethnicity disappeared entirely, and the conflict became just about religion," Abdullahi said. Chaos broke out, as young people on each side began to throw rocks. The candidates ran for their lives, and mobs set fire to the surrounding houses.

After that episode, the Christians issued an edict that no Christian girl could be seen with a Muslim boy. "We

had a problem of inter-marriage," Pastor Sunday Wuyep, a church leader in Yelwa, told me on the first of two visits I made in 2006 and 2007. "Just because our ladies are stupid and attracted to

money," he sighed. Economics lay at the heart of the enmity between the two groups: as merchants and herders, the Muslim Jarawa were much wealthier than the Christian

most corrupt democracies. Last year's presidential election in particular—in which President Olusegun Obasanjo, an evangelical Christian, handed power to a northern Muslim, President Umaru Yar'Adua—was a farce. Ballot boxes were stuffed by thugs or carted off empty by armed heavies in the pay of political candidates. Across the country, political power is a passport to wealth: according to Human Rights Watch, anywhere from \$4 billion to \$8 billion in government money has been embezzled annually for the last eight years. The state has all but abdicated its responsibility for the welfare of its people, roughly half of whom live on less than \$1 a day.

In this vacuum, religion has become a powerful source of identity. Northern Nigeria has one of Africa's oldest and most devout Islamic communities, which was galvanized, like many others, in the 1980s by the global Islamic reawakening that followed the Iranian revolution. For Christians, too, in Nigeria, there's been a revolution: high birthrates and aggressive evangelization over the past

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For a slideshow of Seamus Murphy's photographs produced by *Frontline/World*, PBS's international newsmagazine, visit www.theatlantic.com/nigeria-photos.

century have increased the number of believers from 176,000, or 1.1 percent of the early-20th-century population, to more than 51 million, or more than a third now. Thanks to this explosive growth, the demographic and geographic center of global Christianity will have moved, by 2050, to northern Nigeria, within the Muslim world.

No one knows what this shift will yield, in part because neither faith is a monolith. Indeed, the most overlooked aspect of this global religious encounter may be that the competition *within* the faiths—between Pentecostals and orthodox Christians, or between Islamic groups that want to engage with or reject the modern world—is just as important as the competition *between* the faiths. But it's also true that the fastest-growing forms of faith on both sides tend to be the most effervescent and absolute. They promote a system of living in this world that promises heaven in the next, they see salvation in stark binary terms, and they believe they have a global mandate to spread their exclusive brand of faith.

While religion became a source of friction in Nigeria during the Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, the trouble

famously calls religion's "bloody" geographic borders: outbreaks of violence result not simply from a clash between two powerful religious monoliths, but from tensions at the most vulnerable edges where they meet—zones of desperation and official neglect where faith becomes a rallying cry in the struggle for land, water, and work.

In Nigeria, the two faiths meet along a band of terrain roughly 200 miles wide called the Middle Belt. This swath of land, for the most part (an exception being Nigeria's southwest), marks the fault line between Christianity and Islam not only in Nigeria, but across the entire continent. A satellite image from Google Earth shows the Middle Belt as a gray-green strip between the equator and the 10th parallel, dividing the fawn-colored dry land from the vibrant sub-Saharan jungle canopy. It also separates most of the continent's 367 million Muslims to the north from 417 million Christians to the south. Plagued by bad government, a shortage of water and arable land, and rising birthrates, the Middle Belt is also the victim of environmental change: growing aridity in the north (the

Thanks to explosive growth in Africa, Christianity's demographic and geographic center will have moved, by 2050, to northern Nigeria, within the Muslim world.

between Christians and Muslims intensified in the 1980s, when the first oil boom fizzled and the ensuing economic downturn led to violence. Since then, thousands have been killed in riots between the two groups sparked by various events: aggressive campaigns by foreign evangelists; the implementation in 1999 and 2000 of sharia, or Islamic law, in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states; the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan in 2001; and the 2002 Miss World pageant, when a local Christian reporter, Isioma Daniel, outraged Muslims by writing in one of Nigeria's national papers, *This Day*, that the Prophet Muhammad would have chosen a wife from among the contestants. Most recently, in 2006, riots triggered by Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad left more people dead in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world.

"These conflicts are a result of secular processes," said Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, one of Nigeria's leading intellectuals and a top executive of one of the country's oldest banks, FirstBank. "It's about bad government, economic inequality, and poverty—a struggle for resources." When a government fails its people, they turn elsewhere to safeguard themselves and their futures, and in Nigeria at the beginning of the 21st century, they have turned first to religion. Here, then, is the truth behind what Samuel Huntington

desert creeps forward at slightly less than half a mile a year) and flooding in the south. Shifting weather patterns have made planting and grazing seasons unpredictable and allowed insect-borne diseases, such as malaria, to run rampant.

Islam all but stopped its southward spread here in the late 1800s, because the traders, missionaries, and Sufi jihadists who had carried Islam south couldn't handle the jungle terrain or the tsetse flies that plagued their horses and camels with sleeping sickness. Abdullahi's people, the Jarawa, claim that their rights to the land go back to the days of Usman Dan Fodio, a Sufi teacher and ethnic Fulani herder who launched a 19th-century jihad to purify the faith, promote the education of women, and outlaw the enslavement of his fellow Muslims. Some of his jihadists, called his flag bearers, rode south over vast reaches of dry land until they reached the southern edge of the Sahel, roughly where the town of Yelwa is today.

The high, dry ridges and rocky escarpments of the Middle Belt also provided an ideal defense against Muslim slave raiders for non-Muslim hill people like the Goemai. When Christian missionaries arrived 100 years ago, many targeted these "pagan" hill people. For some, the mission was to create a buffer against the southern

"spread of Mohammedanism," as Karl Kumm, one of the more uncompromising missionaries, put it. But many of his coreligionists had little interest in combating Islam. Instead, armed with the two B's of Bible and bicycle, as well as with the imperative of self-reliance, they dispensed practical advice on health, agriculture, and eventually education, providing a form of "emancipation" for the historically disenfranchised hill people, who also gained a powerful collective identity in Christianity.

The British colonial administration was ambivalent about missionaries, fearing that their efforts to convert Muslims would destabilize Britain's plans for empire-building—as they had elsewhere in Africa. When the British overthrew the caliphate, then unified North and South Nigeria in 1914, the new colonial administration forbade missionaries to enter Muslim lands. Under the British policy of Indirect Rule, which was modeled on the Raj in India, Dan Fodio's emirs were largely left in place. Many came to be seen as colonial agents, losing their religious legitimacy even as they amassed power and wealth. This colonial policy of favoring Muslims over

church on fire and killed everyone who tried to escape. They chased the head of the church, Pastor Sampson Bukar, to his house next door and ran him through with cutlasses. They set fire to the nursery school and the pastor's house. During my first visit to Yelwa in the summer of 2006, his burned Peugeot was still outside. The church had been rebuilt and painted salmon pink. Boys were playing soccer, each wearing only one shoe so that everyone could kick the ball. "Seven in my family were killed," said Sunday as we sat in the churchyard. "We call them martyrs." He pointed to a mound of earth not far from where we were sitting. On top was a small wooden cross: it marked the mass grave for the 78 people killed that day.

"This is about religious intolerance," he went on. "Our God is different than the Muslim God ... If he were the same God, we wouldn't fight." For Pastor Sunday, the clash was millenarian and grounded in the literal words of Christian scripture. "The Bible says in Matthew 24, the time will come when they will pursue us in our churches," he said. Matthew 24 foretells the Tribulation: the war that will precede Armageddon and the final coming of Jesus.

In 2006, riots triggered by Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad left more people dead in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world.

minority Christians left a legacy of mistrust between the two groups. "Every crisis is automatically interpreted as a religious crisis," said Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, the Anglican bishop of Kaduna. "But we all know that, scratch the surface and it's got nothing to do with religion. It's power."

One Tuesday at 7 a.m. in Yelwa, about 70 people were praying their morning devotions at the Church of Christ in Nigeria (founded by none other than the fiery Kumm himself). It was in February 2004, about a year after the elders had issued their edict that no Christian woman was to be seen with a Muslim man. As the worshippers finished their prayers, they heard gunshots and a call from the loudspeakers of the mosque next door: "*Allahu Akhbar*, let us go for jihad." "We were terrified," recalled Pastor Sunday, who had been standing outside the gate as the churchyard swarmed with strangers. He stayed near the church gate, but many other people fled toward the road behind the church. There, men dressed in military fatigues reassured them that they were safe and herded them back to the church. Then the men opened fire.

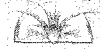
Pastor Sunday fled; that's why he survived. The attackers—who were not, in fact, Nigerian soldiers—set the

A few hundred yards down the road from the church, there's a cornfield. In it, a row of mounds: more mass graves. White signs tally the dead below in green paint: 110, 50, 65, 100, 55, 25, 60, 20, 40, 105. Two months after the church was razed, Christian men and boys surrounded Yelwa. Many were bare-chested; others wore shirts on which they'd reportedly pinned white name tags identifying them as members of the Christian Association of Nigeria, an umbrella organization founded in the 1970s to give Christians a collective and unified voice as strong as that of Muslims. Each tag had a number instead of a name: a code, it seemed, for identification. They attacked the town. According to Human Rights Watch, 660 Muslims were massacred over the course of the next two days, including the patients in the Al-Amin clinic. Twelve mosques and 300 houses went up in flames. Young girls were marched to a nearby Christian town and forced to eat pork and drink alcohol. Many were raped, and 50 were killed.

Yelwa was still a ghost town of sorts in August 2006. In block after burned-out block, people camped in what used to be their homes. The road was lined with more than a dozen ruined mosques and churches, but the rubble was hidden in hip-high elephant grass; canary-yellow morning glories climbed the old foundations. When I arrived at



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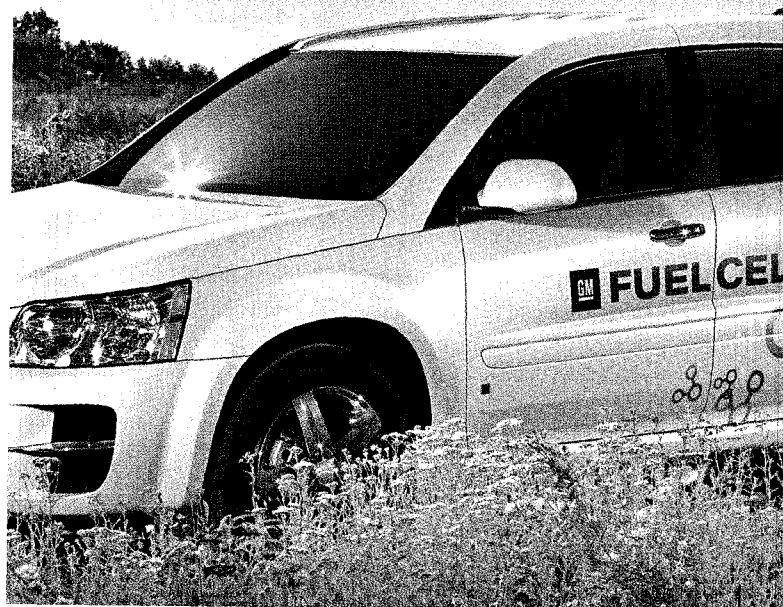
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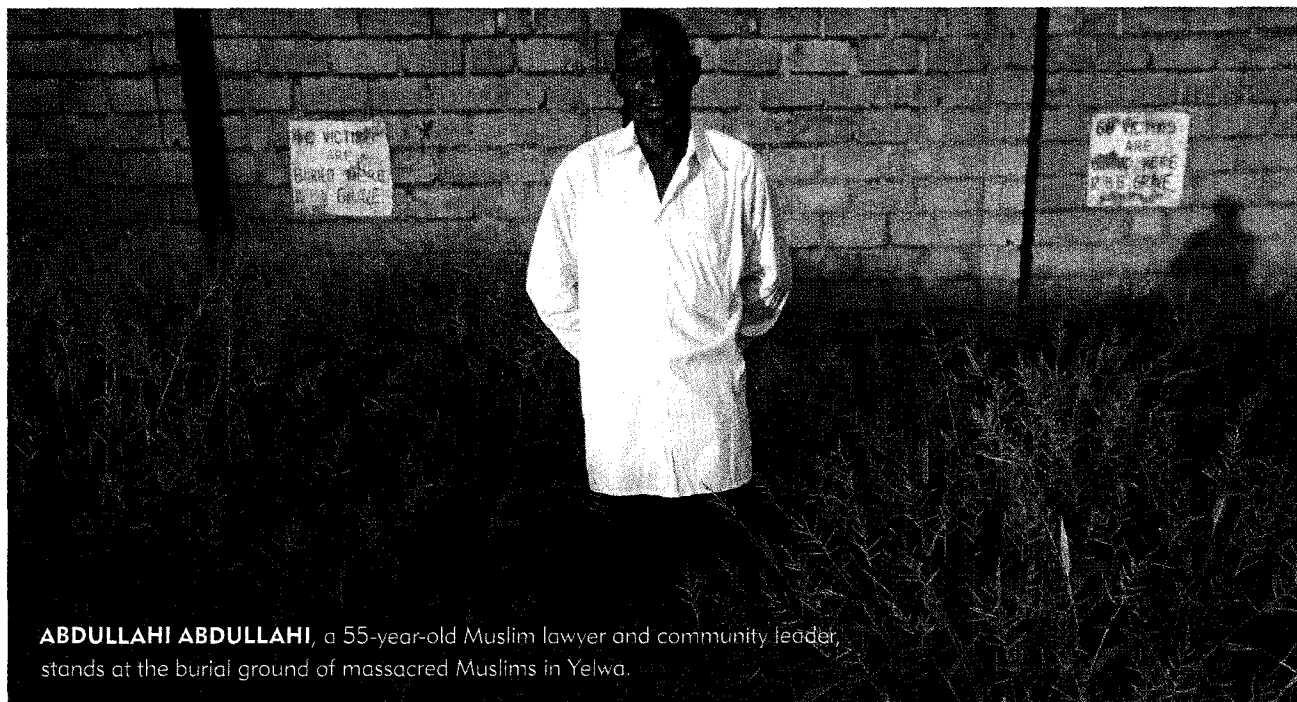
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AN AMERICAN R-E-VOLUTION





ABDULLAHI ABDULLAHI, a 55-year-old Muslim lawyer and community leader, stands at the burial ground of massacred Muslims in Yelwa.

the home of Abdullahi, the Muslim human-rights lawyer, his street was mostly deserted. He stooped on his way out of a low-ceilinged hut. Behind him, I could see the sour faces of a man and woman sitting on the floor by his desk. "Marital dispute," he explained.

It was the rainy season, so I waited out the noon deluge in another small hut on his compound. Finally, Abdullahi ducked inside, a worn accordion file under his arm. His wife followed, carrying a pot of hot spaghetti. In the beginning, he explained, the conflict in Nigeria had nothing whatsoever to do with religion. "Let me give myself as a case study," Abdullahi said. He went to Christian mission schools and federal college, and never, as a Muslim, had any problem. "Throughout this period, I'd never seen religious segregation, because at that time the societal value system was intact. We were taught to respect each other's beliefs and customs." But as the population grew and resources shrank, people began to fight over who had the right to the land and its resources—who belonged as an indigene, and who didn't.

Abdullahi has attempted to bring several cases of ethnic abuse to the government's attention, but as with the church massacre, the government has done little to investigate or to try those involved. He handed me a folder with depositions from one such case. As I read them, Abdullahi returned with two young women, Hamamatu Danladi and Yasira Ibrahim, who had survived the incident detailed in the files. Danladi met my eye as she stood in the doorway; Ibrahim, with long upturned lashes and a moon face, didn't. Abdullahi invited the women in, lowered his head, and left.

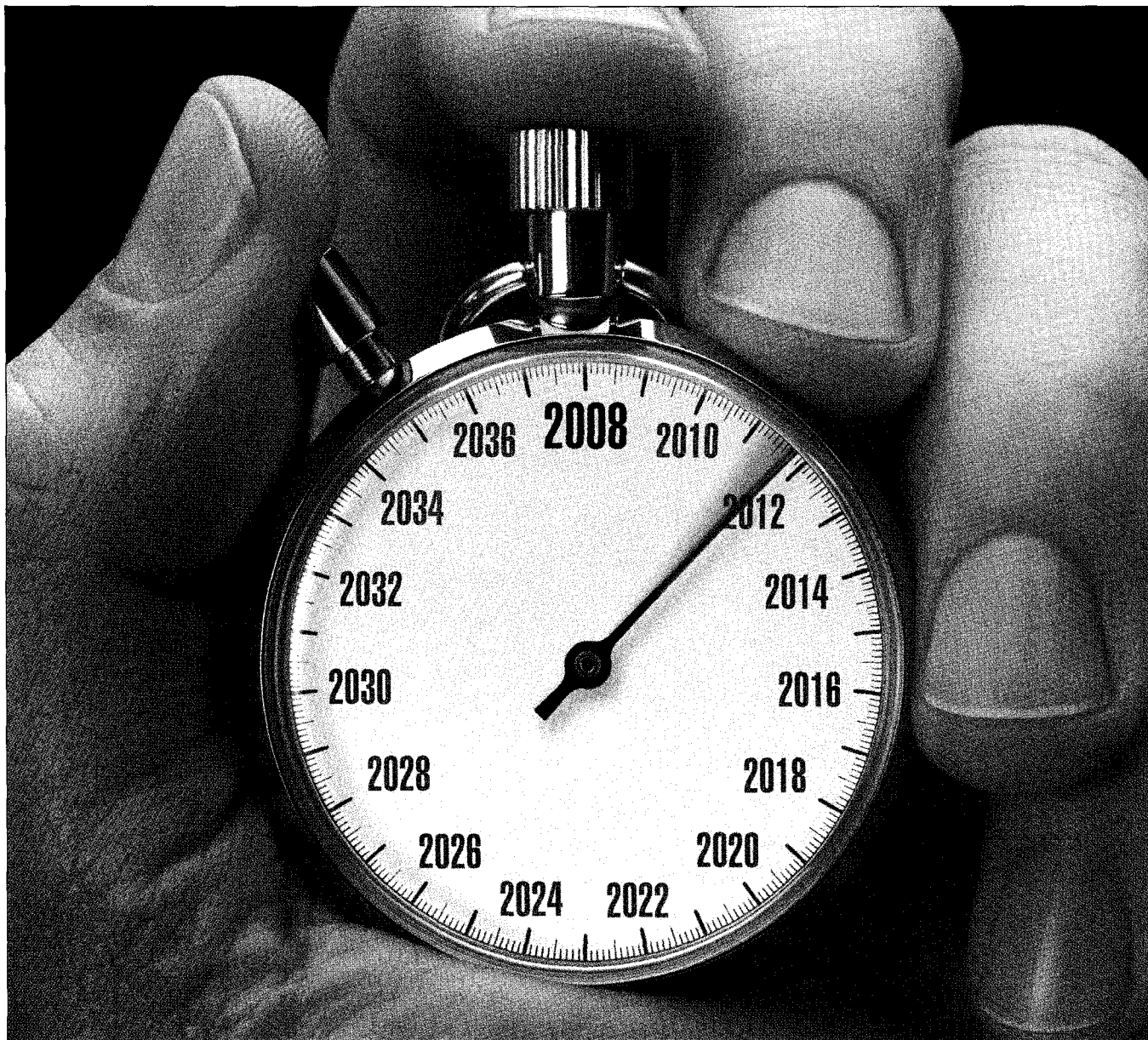
During the Christian attack, the two young women took shelter in an elder's guarded home. On the second

day, the Christian militia arrived at the house. They were covered in red and blue paint and were wearing those numbered white name tags. The Christians first killed the guards, then chose among the women. With others, the two young women were marched toward the Christian village. "They were killing children on the road," Danladi said. Outside the elementary school, her abductor grabbed hold of two Muslim boys she knew, 9 and 10 years old. Along with other men, he took a machete to them until they were in pieces, then wrapped the pieces in a rubber tire and set it on fire.

When Danladi and Ibrahim reached their captors' village, they were forced to drink alcohol and to eat pork and dog meat. Although she was obviously pregnant, Danladi's abductor repeatedly raped her during the next four days. After a month, the police fetched Danladi and Ibrahim from the Christian village and took them to the camp where most of the town's Muslim residents had fled. There, the two young women were reunited with their husbands. They never discussed what happened in the bush.

"The Christians don't want us here because they don't like our religion," Danladi said. "Do you really think they took you because of your religion?" I asked. The women looked at each other. "In Islamic history, there are times when believers and nonbelievers have fought," Danladi said. "We think what happened here is part of the clash that will come. After the clash, people will see poverty and suffering and that's what's happening now. According to our *ulamas* [teachers], there is no way that the whole world will not be Muslim."

Later, I looked up Matthew 24, the verses that Pastor Sunday had cited. In many versions of the Bible, Jesus'



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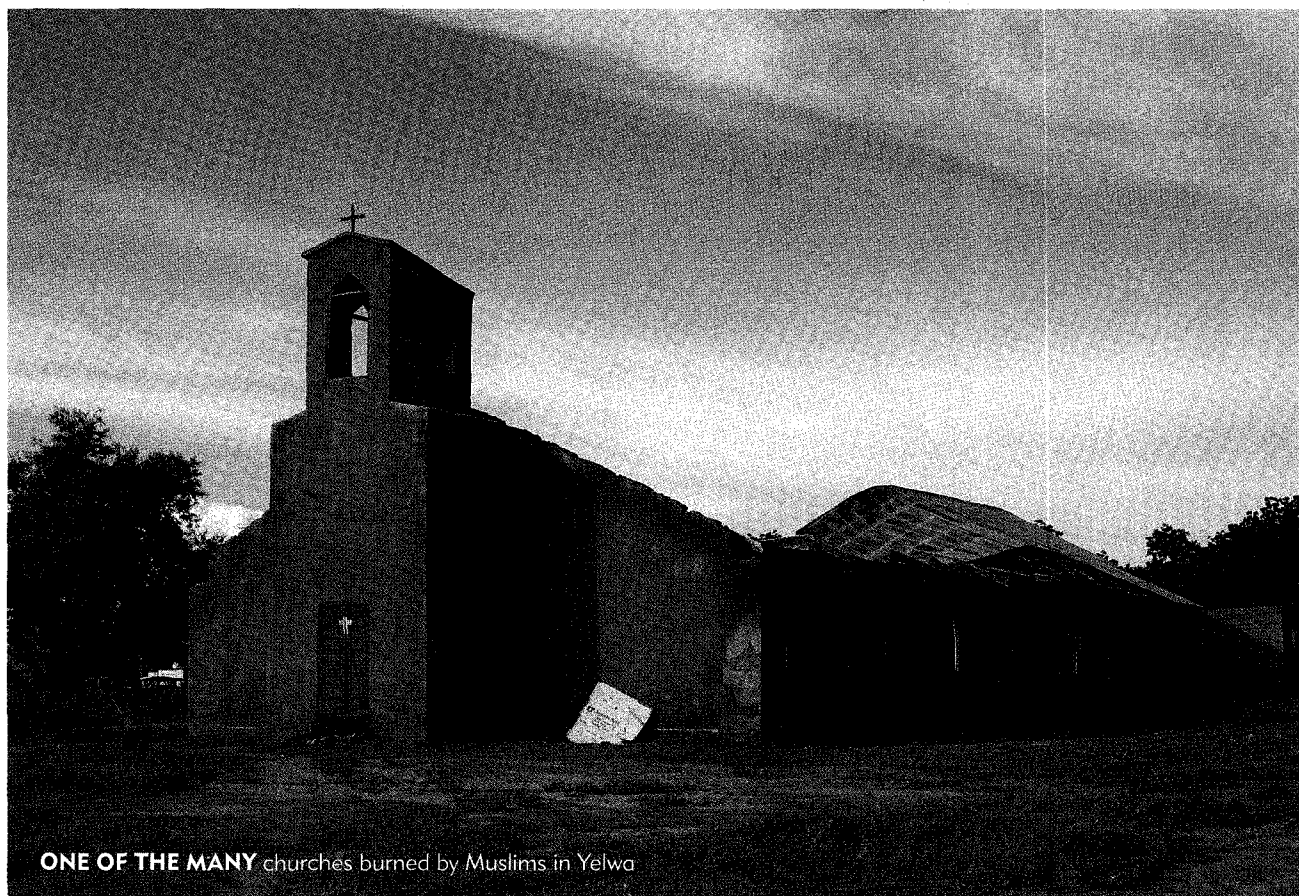
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ONE OF THE MANY churches burned by Muslims in Yelwa

words are inked in red to show that these are the exact and inerrant words of the Lord. Down the rice-paper page, one red verse (Matthew 24:19) caught my eye: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" I thought of Hamamatu Danladi. After her rape, she told me, she didn't give birth for four more months, which meant she carried that child for more than a year. Maybe I didn't understand her. When I returned to visit her a year later, I asked again if I'd misunderstood. No, she said, she'd carried the baby for more than a year. Maybe, she thought, he simply refused to come into this world during the conflagration.

At the time of the massacre, Archbishop Peter Akinola was the president of the Christian Association of Nigeria, whose membership was implicated in the killings. He has since lost his bid for another term but, as primate of the Anglican Church of Nigeria, he is still the leader of 18 million Anglicans. He is a colleague of my father, who was the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in America from 1997 to 2006. But the American Episcopalians' election of an openly homosexual bishop in 2003, which Archbishop Akinola denounced as "satanic," created distance between them. When I arrived in 2006 in the capital of Abuja to see the archbishop, his office door was locked. Its complicated buzzing-in system was

malfunctioning, and he was trapped inside. Finally, after several minutes, the angry buzzes stopped and I could hear a man behind the door rise and come across the floor. The archbishop, in a pale-blue pantsuit and a darker-blue crushed-velvet hat, opened the door.

"My views on Islam are well known: I have nothing more to say," he said, as we sat down. Archbishop Akinola has repeatedly spoken critically about Islam and liberal Western Protestants, and he was understandably wary of my motives for asking his thoughts. For Akinola, the relationship between liberal Protestants and Islam is straightforward: if Western Christians abandon conservative morals, then the global Church will be weakened in its struggle against Islam. "When you have this attack on Christians in Yelwa, and there are no arrests, Christians become *dhimmi*, the vocabulary within Islam that allows Christians and Jews to be seen as second-class citizens. You are subject to the Muslims. You have no rights."

When asked if those wearing name tags that read "Christian Association of Nigeria" had been sent to the Muslim part of Yelwa, the archbishop grinned. "No comment," he said. "No Christian would pray for violence, but it would be utterly naive to sweep this issue of Islam under the carpet." He went on, "I'm not out to combat anybody. I'm only doing what the Holy Spirit tells me to do. I'm living my faith, practicing and preaching that Jesus Christ



A MUSLIM NEIGHBORHOOD in ruins, following attacks by Christians in Yelwa

is the one and only way to God, and they respect me for it. They know where we stand. I've said before: let no Muslim think they have the monopoly on violence."

Archbishop Akinola, 63, is a Yoruba, a member of an ethnic group from southwestern Nigeria, where Christians and Muslims coexist peacefully. But the archbishop's understanding of Islam was forged by his experience in the north, where he watched the persecution of a Christian minority. He was more interested during our interview, though, in talking about the West than about Nigeria.

"People are thinking that Islam is an issue in Africa and Asia, but you in the West are sitting on explosives." What people in the West don't understand, he said, "is that what Islam failed to accomplish by the sword in the eighth century, it's trying to do by immigration so that Muslims become citizens and demand their rights. A Muslim man has four wives; the wives have four or five children each. This is how they turned Christians into a minority in North Africa."

He went on, "The West has thrown God out, and Islam is filling that vacuum for you, and now your Christian heritage is being destroyed ... You people are so afraid of being accused of being Islam-phobic. Consequently everyone recedes and says nothing ... Over the years, Christians have been so naive—avoiding politics, economics, and the military because they're dirty business. The missionaries

taught that. Dress in tatters. Wear your bedroom slippers. Be poor. But Christians are beginning to wake up to the fact that money isn't evil, the love of money is, and it isn't wrong to have some of it. Neither is politics."

Democracy, Nigerians told me repeatedly, is a numbers game. That's why whoever has more believers is on top. In that competition, Christianity has a recruiting tool beyond the frontline gospel preached by those such as Archbishop Akinola: Pentecostalism, one of the world's most diverse and fastest-growing religious movements. In Nigeria, the oil boom of the 1970s brought a massive movement of people into cities looking for work. That boom's collapse spurred the growth of the Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity, with its emphasis on good health and getting rich; and of the African Initiated Churches, or AICs, which began about 100 years ago, when several charismatic African prophets successfully converted millions to Christianity. Today, AIC members account for one-quarter of Africa's 417 million Christians.

One bustling Pentecostal hub, Canaanland, the 565-acre headquarters of the Living Faith Church, has three banks, a bakery, and its own university, Covenant, which is the sister school of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Canaanland is about an hour and a half north of Lagos, which has an estimated population of 12 million



PASTOR REV. DR. FRED ADDO stands in front of his congregation (and some of their offerings) at the International Praise Cathedral in Kaduna.

and is projected to become the world's 12th-largest city by 2020. With 300,000 people worshipping at a single service at the Canaanland headquarters alone and 300 branches across the country, Living Faith is one of Nigeria's megachurches, and the dapper Bishop David Oyedepo is its prophet. The bishop, whose bald pate glistens above deep-set eyes and dazzling teeth, never wanted to be pastor: he had no interest in being poor, he told me. "When God made me a pastor, I wept. I hated poverty in the Church—how can the children of God live as rats?"

Bishop Oyedepo built Canaanland to preach the Gospel of Prosperity. As he said, "If God is truly a father, there is no father that wants his children to be beggars. He wants them to prosper." In the parking lot at Canaanland, beyond the massive complex of unusually clean toilets, flapping banners promise: **WHATSOEVER YOU ASK IN MY NAME, HE SHALL GIVE YOU, and BY HIS STRIPES HE GIVES US BLESSINGS.**

The Pentecostal movement is so vast and varied, it's a mistake to generalize about its unifying principles. But Pentecostals do tend to share an experience of the Holy Spirit, or the numinous, that offers the gift of salvation and success in everyday life—particularly in the realms of personal health and finance. Archbishop Akinola, whose own Anglican Church is more threatened in some ways by the rise of Pentecostalism than by the rise of Islam, finds these teachings suspect: "When you preach prosperity and not suffering, any Christianity devoid of the cross is a pseudo-religion."

But Bishop Oyedepo's followers say that those who criticize don't understand what's happening in Africa. "There's a kind of revolution going on in Africa," one of the bishop's employees, Professor Prince Famous Izedonmi, said. "America tolerates God. Africa celebrates God. We're called 'the continent of darkness,' but that's when you appreciate the light. Jesus is the light." The professor, a Muslim prince who converted to Christianity as a child to cure himself of migraine headaches, was the head of Covenant University's accounting department and director of its Centre for Entrepreneurial Development Studies.

"God isn't against wealth," Professor Famous said. "Revelations talks about streets paved with gold." He added, "Look at how Jesus dressed." When I appeared baffled, he patiently explained that since the soldiers cast lots for Christ's clothes, they were clearly expensive. In Canaanland, clothes matter: the pastors wear flashy ones and they drive fast cars as a sign of God's favor. They draw their salaries from sizable weekly contributions. On Sundays at some Nigerian Pentecostal churches, armored bank trucks reportedly idle in church parking lots, while during the service, believers hand over cash, cell phones, cars—all with the belief that if they give to God, God will make them rich. It's said that if the Christian Prosperity churches disappeared, the banks of Nigeria would collapse.

But to see the Prosperity movement as simply a get-rich-quick scheme is to miss its importance. In many ways, Pentecostalism has updated Max Weber's Protestant work

ethic for the 21st century. Pentecostals do not drink, gamble, or engage in extramarital sex; so all of that formerly illicit energy can go into either business or education. Covenant has been voted the best private university in Nigeria by Nigeria's National Universities Commission. Education is an essential element of the Prosperity message; so is hard work. "Abraham was a workaholic," Professor Famous said. "He worked 16 or 17 hours a day."

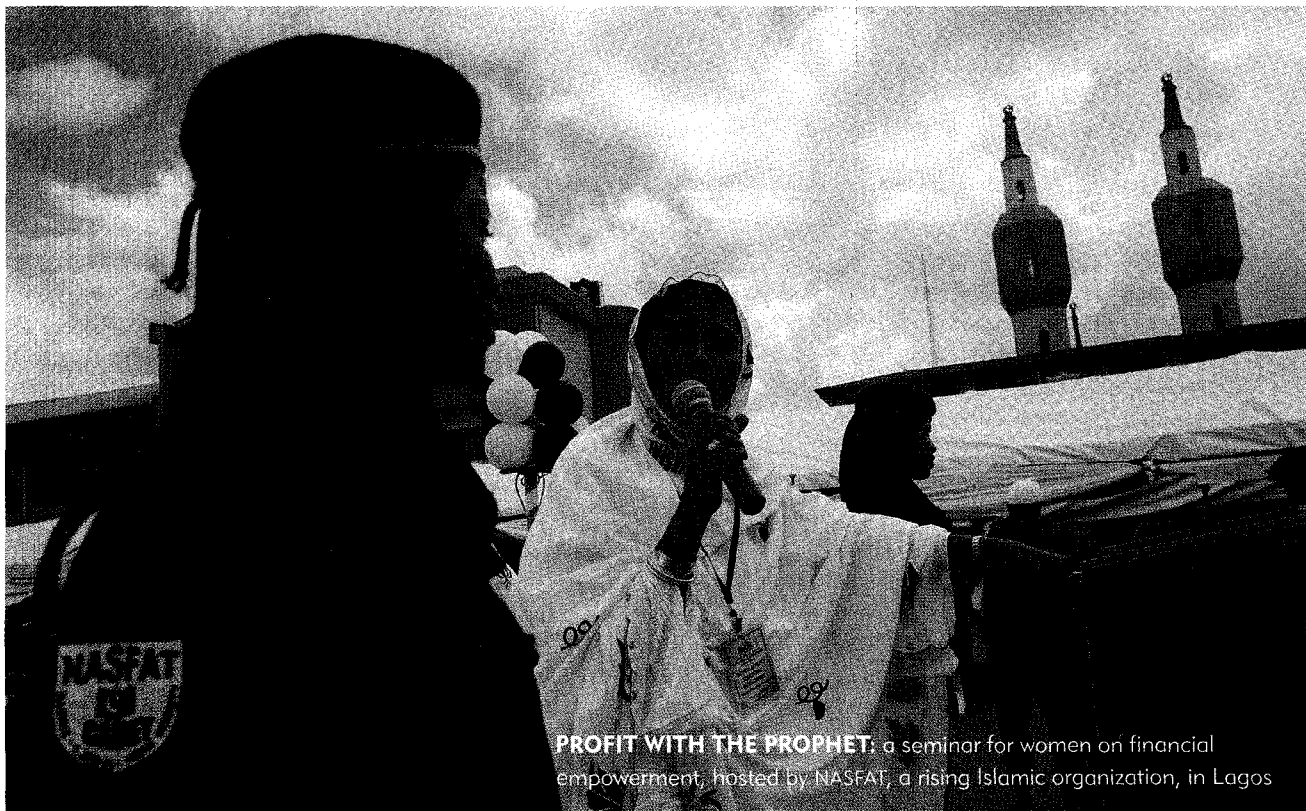
During my first visit to Covenant, school wasn't in session, so I poked around the empty labs until I ran into a lone student, Mchenson Ugwu, 22, studying mechanical engineering in hopes of getting a job in the oil industry. Ugwu was born again in 2004. "Once in a while I backslide and have to rededicate my life to Christ," he said. "That's how it works: backslide, rededicate." For Ugwu, salvation had very little to do with the next world; it was all about this one. "Because he owns everything here on Earth, if you make God your father, beginning and end, he'll keep you up. Our bishop is the perfect example. He tells us he hasn't been poor in 25 years, and God takes him from one level to the next."

Later, the bishop led me across his red shag carpet to a white fountain tinkling in the corner of his office. "The problem with the African man is that he sees himself as poor, and others see him as poor," the bishop said. He walked over to his desk and handed me a stack of his books—he's written 60—including one of the best sellers, *Understanding Financial Prosperity*. The cover design

features Nigerian banknotes. The back cover reads: "I am not a preacher of prosperity, I am a prophet. God spoke specifically to me while I was away in America for a meeting. 'Get down home and make My people rich!'"

The Christian Gospel of Prosperity is so powerful that it has spawned a unique Nigerian phenomenon: an Islamic organization called Nasrul-Lahi-il-Fathi (NASFAT). The name is drawn from a verse in the eighth chapter of the Koran: "There is no help except from Allah." This is the same chapter, "The Spoils of War," or Al-Anfal, that Saddam Hussein cited to justify his genocide against the Kurds. But NASFAT has no interest in violence. Instead, the organization is based on economic empowerment and prosperity with an Islamic spin. Started with about a dozen members in the 1990s, NASFAT now has 1.2 million members in Nigeria and branches in 25 other countries. The organization has an entrepreneurship program, a clinic, a prison-outreach program, a task force to address HIV/AIDS, a travel agency, and a soft-drink company called Nasmalt, whose profits go to the poor. It even offers matchmaking. Although many conservatives believe that this engagement with the secular world is *haram*, forbidden, and distinctly un-Islamic, NASFAT argues that it is the only way to survive in the marketplace.

"We are competing for faithfuls," NASFAT's executive secretary, Zikrullah Kunle Hassan, said one blistering Sunday last August in Lagos. "Many people now want God.



PROFIT WITH THE PROPHET: a seminar for women on financial empowerment, hosted by NASFAT, a rising Islamic organization, in Lagos

This is happening especially among the youth, that they feel they need to be committed to faith." Gesturing to the streets choked with more than 100,000 men and women clad in shining white as they came from a prayer service at the Lagos Secretariat Mosque, he explained that NASFAT meets on Sundays so that Muslims have something to do while Christians attend church. "The space on Sunday is usually not dominated by Islam, but other faiths and other values. But when our people come here, they come and drink from the fountain of Islam."

The prayer ground looked like a fair. Hawkers sold lemons from a wheelbarrow. Small booths offered pretty, scalloped *hijabs*, embroidered with "NASFAT" in blue. Men sat on prayer mats eating rice, while women attended a lecture on ways to make money that are in keeping with Islam.

NASFAT's primary mission is to reclaim those values the world sees as Western, but which its members perceive as integral to the success of the global Islamic community, or *ummah*. Foremost is education. "We know that the West is ahead today because of education," Hassan said. NASFAT has its own nursery, primary, and secondary schools, as well as the brand-new Fountain University. While many orthodox

help you get, here in this country." He added, "Success, triumph, and glory are from the Creator."

Prosperity Gospel is more a symptom than the disease," Father Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Roman Catholic author of *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, told me in his office above a Catholic church in the city of Kaduna, at the northern edge of the Middle Belt. To his mind, Nigerians' resort to religion to achieve prosperity was a natural response to their corrupt political landscape and the absence of any civil government. "You can buy a car and insure it," he continued. "You don't need a priest to pray over the car, to bless your house to keep robbers away ... Here, there's no guarantee. God is being called upon to police a lot of areas of our lives." This need for God's protection isn't only individual, but collective and political, given the collapse of the state.

Many Muslims share that point of view. Take, for example, the ongoing effort to implement sharia, or Islamic law, in northern Nigeria, which came to fruition in 1999. On a practical level, sharia, with its promise of moral justice at the local level, seems to offer an end to

Nigerians have now seen that sharia has not stanching corruption. In fact, many of the politicians who backed sharia have been linked to massive scandals.

believers say that this new movement is *bid'ah*, innovation, and therefore dangerously un-Islamic, NASFAT's adherents disagree, arguing that they are part of a charismatic Muslim movement that addresses social welfare—and that is on its way to sweeping the world. (They're also mostly Muslims from Nigeria's southwest, which means they grew up around Christianity and are more comfortable with its ways.) If every answer to life can be found in the Koran, Hassan said, then questions of how to survive and prosper must be addressed there. When conservative northern clerics kick up a fuss about NASFAT's growing presence in the communities, NASFAT reaches out to them with gestures like involving community youth in business programs.

"To be honest, for us there's a competition of civilizations, there's a competition of values, and to me, the roots of the conflict are that we believe all civilizations have collapsed in the face of Western civilization," he went on. "Communism collapsed. All other values collapsed. Islam remained resistant to Western civilization." In order to survive, Islam has to address the contemporary needs of its people and compete with the Christian promise of prosperity. As one young member, who joined the organization to get a job through its business network, told me, "There's nothing you want to achieve that NASFAT can't

the corruption that bedevils the people. And given that many Nigerians associate that corruption with the failure of Western-style democracy in Africa, "to reinstate the sharia ... is not only good religion, it is supremely sound politics," argues Murray Last, an emeritus professor at University College London.

Yet despite a huge outcry from Christians and the West, the implementation of sharia, which is currently on the books in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states, has had very little practical impact. The harsh criminal punishments spelled out in the *hudud* have proven, for the most part, impossible to implement. And northern Nigerians have now seen that sharia has not stanching the corruption they face every day. In fact, many of the politicians who backed sharia have been linked to massive corruption; these include the biggest advocate, the former governor of Zamfara state, who is even rumored to have paid a man to let the state amputate his hand for stealing livestock.

So if religion has proven not to safeguard the car, not to cure malaria, not even to stop politicians from stuffing ballot boxes, is it worth fighting and dying for? Popular disillusionment is one reason why Father Kukah believes that Nigeria's religious mayhem is an isolated stage in its development of plural stability. Paradoxically, this



THE FAITHFUL gather at the Redeemed Church of Christ, outside Lagos

progression is clearest in Kaduna, formerly one of the most intense flash points, where Kukah lives. Over the past 20 years, many of the city's churches and mosques have been burned down, and thousands of residents have been killed in battles fueled by religion. Kaduna, whose name means "crocodile," is a microcosm of Nigeria: its population of 1.5 million people is divided in half between Muslims and Christians. The split isn't just demographic; it's geographic. The city's Muslim neighborhoods—nicknamed Baghdad and Afghanistan—are on the north side of town. The Christian ones—called Television, Haifa, and Jerusalem—are on the south side. The Kaduna River separates them.

Pastor James Movel Wuye was born in Kaduna into an ethnic minority called Gbagyi. Historically, his people were aboriginal warriors who fought off Hausa Muslim slave raiders before the arrival of the British, who actually made things worse. "They were merciless, the Muslims who were ruling over us," he said. His people still call the Hausa Muslims *ajei*, which means "those who trouble us." Pastor James's father was a soldier, and when James and the other barracks boys played war, their imagined enemies were their Hausa oppressors. As a teenager, James rebelled: he drank and smoked, and he wooed a long list of girlfriends. He also joined the Christian Association of Nigeria and, at 27, became general secretary of the Youth Wing. In 1987, the Middle Belt exploded. When fighting between Christians and Muslims reached Kaduna, Pastor James became the head of a Christian militia. "We took an oath of secrecy," he said. "We carried pictures of those

[of us] who'd been killed. We were martyrs: we felt that we were dying in defense of the Church." The war, like the faith itself, became a struggle for liberation.

James incited violence by relying on the literal, inspired word of scripture. "I used to say, 'We've been beaten on both cheeks, there's no other cheek to turn,'" he said. "I used Luke 22:36: as Jesus said to the disciples the night before his crucifixion, 'And if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.'" When the pastor was 32, a fight broke out between Christians and Muslims over control of a market. "That day, we were outnumbered," he said. "Twenty of my friends were killed. I passed out, so I don't know exactly what happened." When he woke up, his right arm was gone, sliced off with a machete.

Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa is also a former militia leader, from the other side of the river, where he still lives. "We were fighting on either side of town, James and I," he told me when I first visited his home in August 2006. Ashafa's life is equally steeped in the history of his people. He comes from a long line of Muslim scholars who were powerful under the caliphate of Usman Dan Fodio, and his story, too, is a tale of oppression and reaction to oppression. "My family had, all its life, struggled against colonialists and missionaries because they watched the colonialists bring Christianity into the hinterlands. I grew up hearing stories of how our land was stolen and our people were crushed." When Ashafa was a boy, his father refused to let him go to school, because missionaries ran

the school. "Missionaries are evil," he told his son. But Ashafa's uncle talked his father into it, saying, "Let the boy go to school. Don't you trust your God?"

At mission school, Ashafa won the prize for best Bible student; he had a gift for memorization. After school, Ashafa would use a slingshot to fling stones at women who were showing their bare arms or backs in the streets. When the religious crisis hit Kaduna in 1987, Ashafa, like James, became a militia leader. The two were enemies. "We planted the seed of genocide, and we used the scripture to do that," Ashafa said. "In Islam, you must fight in defense of any women, children, or old people—Muslim or not—so as a leader, you create a scenario where this is the only interpretation," he explained. But Ashafa's mentor, a Sufi hermit, tried to warn the young man away from violence. "You will not cross the ocean with hate in your heart," he told Ashafa.

In 1992, Christian militiamen stabbed the hermit to death and threw his body down a well. Ashafa's only mission became revenge: he was going to kill James. Then, one Friday during a sermon, Ashafa's imam told the story of when the Prophet Muhammad had gone to preach at Ta'if, a town about 70 miles southeast of Mecca. Bleeding after being stoned and cast out of town, Muhammad was visited by an angel who asked if he'd like those who mistreated him to be destroyed. Muhammad said no. "The

imam was talking directly to me," Ashafa said. During the sermon, he began to cry. Next time he met James, he'd forgiven him entirely. To prove it, he went to visit James's sick mother in the hospital.

Slowly, the pastor and the imam began to work together, but James was leery. "Ashafa carries the psychological mark. I carry the physical and psychological mark," he said. "He talks so much. I'm a little miserly with words. So when he uses his energy like that, he sleeps very deeply. There were instances where we shared a room. He's a very heavy sleeper. You can actually take the pillow off his head and he will just struggle and go back to sleep. More than once, several times, I was tempted to use the pillow to suffocate him. But this restraining force of the deepness of my faith comes ringing through my ears."

At a Christian conference in Nigeria sponsored by Pat Robertson—one of the most anti-Muslim preachers in the world—a fellow pastor pulled James aside and said, in almost the same words as the Sufi hermit, "You can't preach Jesus with hate in your heart." James said, "That was my real turning point. I came back totally deprogrammed. I know Pat Robertson might have had another agenda, but I was truly changed."

For more than a decade now, James and Ashafa have traveled to Nigerian cities and to other countries where Christians and Muslims are fighting. They tell their stories of how they manipulated religious texts to get young people into the streets to shed blood. Both still adhere strictly to the scripture; they just read it more deeply and emphasize different verses.

Nonbelievers may wonder how these "deprogramming" efforts can actually work. But religion is the X factor in conflicts like Nigeria's, which can't be reduced just to economics. As Barbara Cooper, the author of *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*, puts it, "Faith matters."

Pastor James sent me on a tour of Kaduna with one of his employees, Haruna Yakubu, a former Islamic militant who now works as a youth coordinator for the Interfaith Mediation Centre, which the pair of religious allies founded. Yakubu took me to see the poured-cement skeleton of the fire-ravaged Alafia Oluwa Baptist Church. "The Baptists want to sell it," Yakubu said, as we climbed out of the pastor's aging Mercedes. The cross and spire had been sheared off, but the walls and heavy cement Romanesque arches were still standing. They now enclosed a large grassy field; a cow was tethered to a tree. I walked toward the narthex, but Yakubu stopped me. It stank of human excrement. "The locals have turned it into a toilet," he said, uncomfortably. On the wall, through a hole blasted into the cement, someone had painted a picture of a naked woman, a penis with "Pastor S—" written on it pointed between her spread legs. "We're trying to convince the Baptists to come back, but they don't want to." I could see why. I couldn't imagine a more desecrated place. In 2007,

EXECUTIVE SHOESHINE

It may go on snowing forever,
but meanwhile, how he's basking
in the sun of his own multi-tasking!
He's perched erect on his throne,
looking down on the airport food court,
as the silver snail of a cell-phone
earpiece hooked to his ear
hangs on his every word.
No way to cut him short
until the runways are cleared
and they've finished out there de-icing
the right wing, then the left wing
of all those planes before his.
Could he strike us a deal with the weather?
The man hunched below him polishes
one wingtip, then the other.

—MARY JO SALTER

Mary Jo Salter's sixth collection, *A Phone Call to the Future: New and Selected Poems*, has just been published. She teaches in the Writing Seminars program at Johns Hopkins University.

the Christians sold it after all. When Yakubu and I drove by a year after our first visit, the word *masalaci*, which means "mosque," had been spray-painted across it in red.

We drove in silence. Yakubu looked out of the car's smeared window at the colonial-era ash trees lining the broad road toward the polo ground. "Our religious leaders are some of our most dangerous people," he said. "They preach that they want us to go back to Medina, but we can't go back to Medina." Medina, the city in which Muhammad led an army and a state, has different connotations than Mecca, the city of his youth. In the Koran, the verses from Medina speak frequently of war and violence, unlike the ones from Mecca. "Even the Prophet lived with Christians; why can't we? If we call ourselves true Muslims, why can't we do that?" said Yakubu.

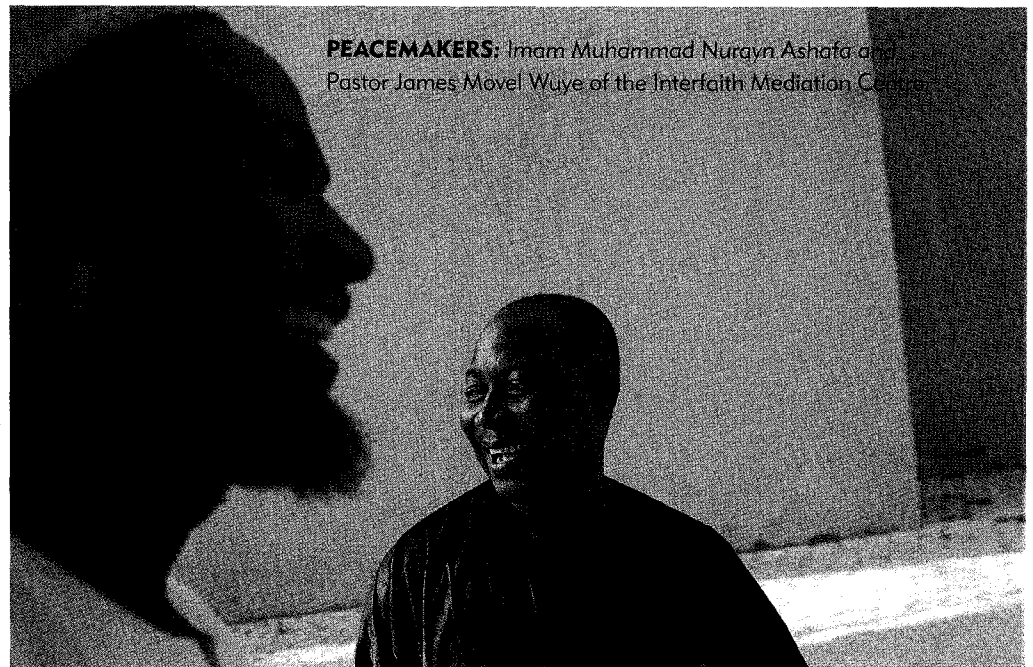
Along the road, red-eyed boys sold jerricans of petrol. Nigeria is the United States' fifth-largest supplier of oil, but because of corruption and mismanagement, it imports much of its gasoline. During price hikes and shortages, these young hawkers appear by the roadside. Such boys are the first to join the fighting; their gas cans become weapons. Usually someone's paying them. In the north, there are millions of these jobless and school-less young men. For the price of a meal, they form a ready army.

One Friday before afternoon prayer, I visited Imam Ashafa at home. He'd already solved three neighborhood disputes that morning. Two smiling old men wearing dark glasses sat on his green sectional couch. Both were blind, and the imam had started a foundation to help them. His two young wives, Fatima and Aisha, both disarmingly warm and very attractive, served tea on top of a tin canister. "I like pretty women," the imam told me later. The room was stuffy: the windows were shut and the green-and-white striped curtains drawn in *purdah*. On one closed door, a bumper sticker read COMBAT AIDS WITH *SHARIA*. The method was clear: abstinence. The imam and the pastor share the same conservative moral values, which has also helped them to find common ground.

Frequently, the problems each confronted weren't divisions between Christians and Muslims, but arguments within his own side. One of Ashafa's greatest challenges is to manage Kaduna's growing list of Muslim groups at odds with each other. The self-proclaimed Shia of northern

Nigeria are closely tied to Iran. They're engaged in a cold war—which sometimes heats up—with a radical group of Sunnis. Some Sunni hardliners, in turn, rail against what they see as the "corrupt" Islam practiced by Nigeria's Sufi majority. As among the Christians, the divisions between the Muslims continue to deepen—a splintering that undermines any facile notions of a global clash of two monoliths. Still, the imam is frequently accused of being a sellout because he associates with Christians. He identifies himself very much as a fundamentalist and sees himself as one who emulates Muhammad. Although he and Pastor James don't discuss it, he also proselytizes among Christians. "I want James to die as a Muslim, and he wants me to die as a Christian. My Islam is proselytizing. It's about bringing the whole world to Islam," he told me that day.

Such missionary zeal drives both men, infusing their struggle to rise above their history of conflict with the



PEACEMAKERS: Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movele Wuye of the Interfaith Mediation Centre

same undercurrent of competitive tension that runs across the Middle Belt and the continent. As Pastor James told me at his office, Peace Hall, in Kaduna, he still believes strongly in absolute and exclusive salvation mandated by the gospel: "Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.'" He still challenges Christians to rely on the strict and literal word, and he's still uncompromising on fundamental issues of Christianity. "We see same-sex marriages in the United States as signs of end times: it's Sodom and Gomorrah," he told me. "But I also want to say you can believe what you want to believe. We have to find a space for coexistence." ■

Eliza Griswold, a fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of *Wideawake Field* (2007), is working on a book about Christianity and Islam, *The Tenth Parallel*.

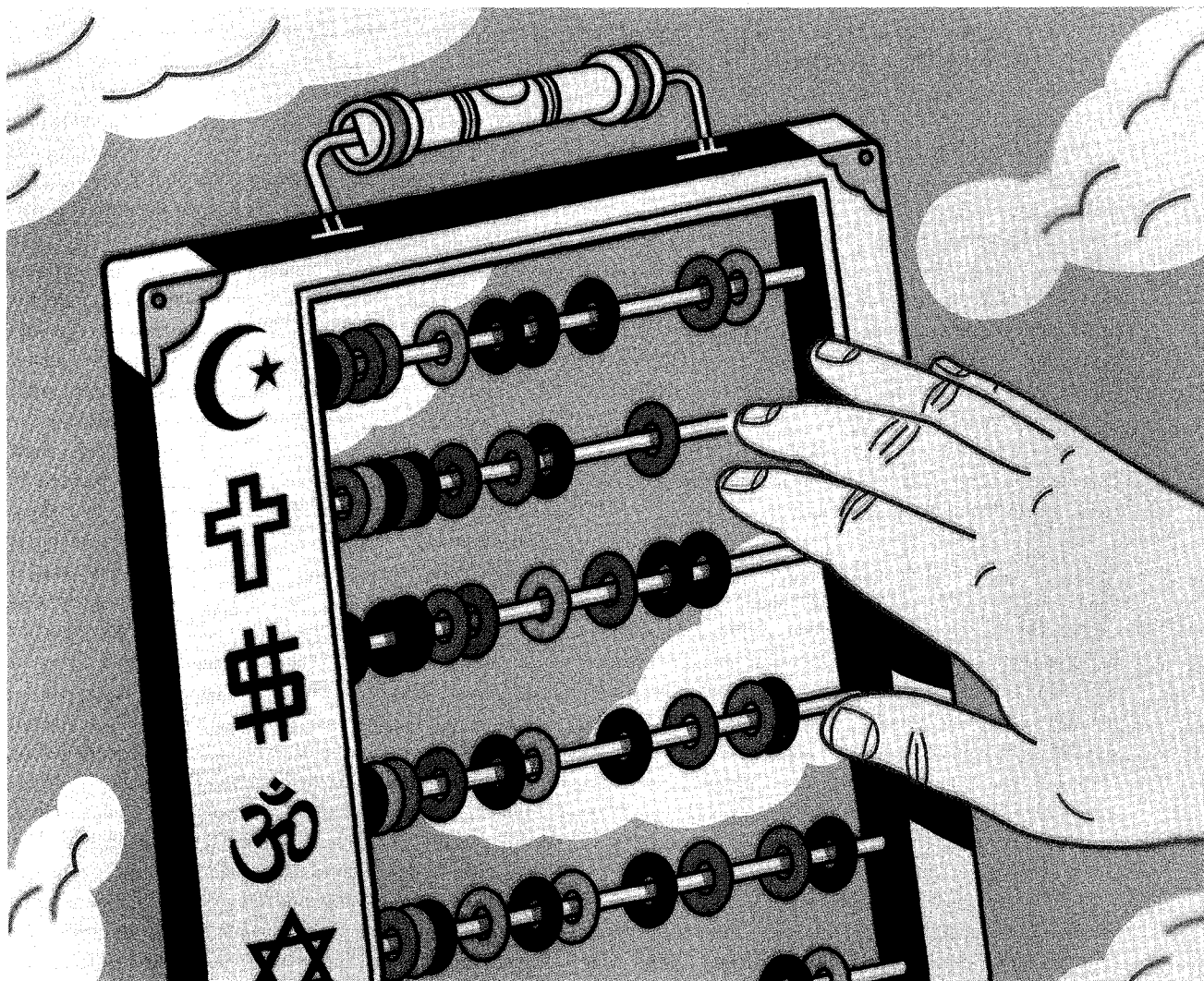
The coming religious peace

BY ALAN WOLFE

Illustration by Harry Campbell

And the Winner Is ...

Human beings have never lacked for things to fight over, but for the last two millennia, they have fought the most over ideas involving the divine. Politics, technology, military capacity, and diseases have all played decisive roles in shaping history, yet it is impossible to understand the rise and fall of empires, the clash of civilizations, and the evolving balance of power without appreciating the unique fervor that religion inspires, and the speed with which new religions can spread. ¶ Christianity, a minority sect during much of the Roman Empire, became a world religion with a vast following after the Emperor Constantine converted to it, in the fourth century A.D. Then came Islam, in the seventh century: just a hundred years after Muhammad's death, in 632, the religion he founded reached beyond the Middle East to Africa, India, and significant parts of Spain and France. The Protestant Reformation of 1517 quickly engulfed »



half of Europe, migrated to the New World, and fueled the Counter-Reformation in the remaining Catholic states on the Continent—by 1618, the Thirty Years' War had begun, resulting in the devastation of large swaths of western Europe and the death of some 30 percent of Germany's population. Every new outburst of religious passion, while producing ecstasy and revelation for some, has disrupted established loyalties, fueled intolerance, and led to violence between the chosen and the damned.

It may seem, at first glance, that little has changed. A recent cover story in *The Economist*, titled "The New Wars of Religion," proclaimed, "Faith will unsettle politics everywhere this century." Some scholars of religion have found new sport in predicting which religions will gain the most adherents (and upset the most applecarts) during the coming decades. Pentecostalism is one favorite candidate; it is sweeping through Latin America and Africa, already claiming some half-billion followers around the world. Catholicism is vying for the same conservative turf; Pope Benedict XVI's insistence on stricter religious teachings, though not likely to grow the Church in Boston,

appears intended to win more souls in Bogotá and Brazzaville. Islam claims a fifth of the world's population, and its share is climbing quickly; it is only a matter of time, many believe, before it surpasses Christianity, which is embraced by a third of the world's population, to become the predominant faith. Hindus and Buddhists together make up 20 percent of the world's people, and high birth-rates in the countries in which they are dominant suggest that this proportion will grow. Some think that other religions will have to make room for Mormonism, an infant compared with many other faiths. (Those others will have ample time to do so—although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is growing quickly, it has just 12 million members, half in the United States.) All in all, *The Economist* forecasts, by mid-century, 80 percent of the world's people will adhere to one of the major faiths.

A lot rides on which of these predictions turn out to be true, and on how and where different religions bump up against one another. A common worry is that intense competition for souls could produce another era in which religious conflict leads to religious war—only this time

with nuclear weapons. If we are really in for anything like the kind of zeal that accompanied earlier periods of religious expansion, we might as well say goodbye to the Enlightenment and its principles of tolerance.

Yet breathless warnings about rising religious fervor and conflicts to come ignore two basic facts. First, many areas of the world are experiencing a *decline* in religious belief and practice. Second, where religions are flourishing, they are also generally evolving—very often in ways that allow them to fit more easily into secular societies, and that weaken them as politically disruptive forces. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal once famously showed that it would be irrational to bet against the existence of God. It would be equally foolish, in the long run, to bet against the power of the Enlightenment. The answer to the question of which religion will dominate the future, at least politically, may well be: None of the above.

Until relatively recently, most social theorists, from Marx to Freud to Weber, believed that as societies became more modern, religion would lose its capacity to inspire. Industrialization would substitute the rational pursuit of self-interest for blind submission to authority. Science would undermine belief in miracles. Democracy would encourage the separation of church and state. Gender equality would undermine patriarchy, and with it, clerical authority. However one defined *modernity*, it always seemed likely to involve societies focused on this world rather than on some other.

But intellectual fashions are fickle, and the idea of inevitable secularization has fallen out of favor with many scholars and journalists. Still, its most basic tenet—that material progress will slowly erode religious fervor—appears unassailable. Last October, the Pew Global Attitudes Project plotted 44 countries according to per capita gross domestic product and intensity of religious belief, gauged by the responses to several questions about faith (a rendition of the Pew data appears on the opposite page). The pattern, as seen in the Pew study and a number of other sources, is hard to miss: when God and Mammon collide, Mammon usually wins.

Toward the right edge of the graph—in the realm of the most-prosperous countries—and at the very bottom lies western Europe, where God, if not dead, has only a faint pulse. Islam, to be sure, is increasingly prevalent in countries such as France and Great Britain, and one can also detect a slight uptick in Christian religiosity across much of the Continent in the past decade or so. But at the same time, the region's last significant pockets of concentrated religiosity are collapsing. Fifty years ago, Spain and Ireland were two of the most religious countries in Europe; now they are among the least. Not long ago, Spain was governed by a fascist dictator in close collaboration with the Catholic Church; now it allows both gay

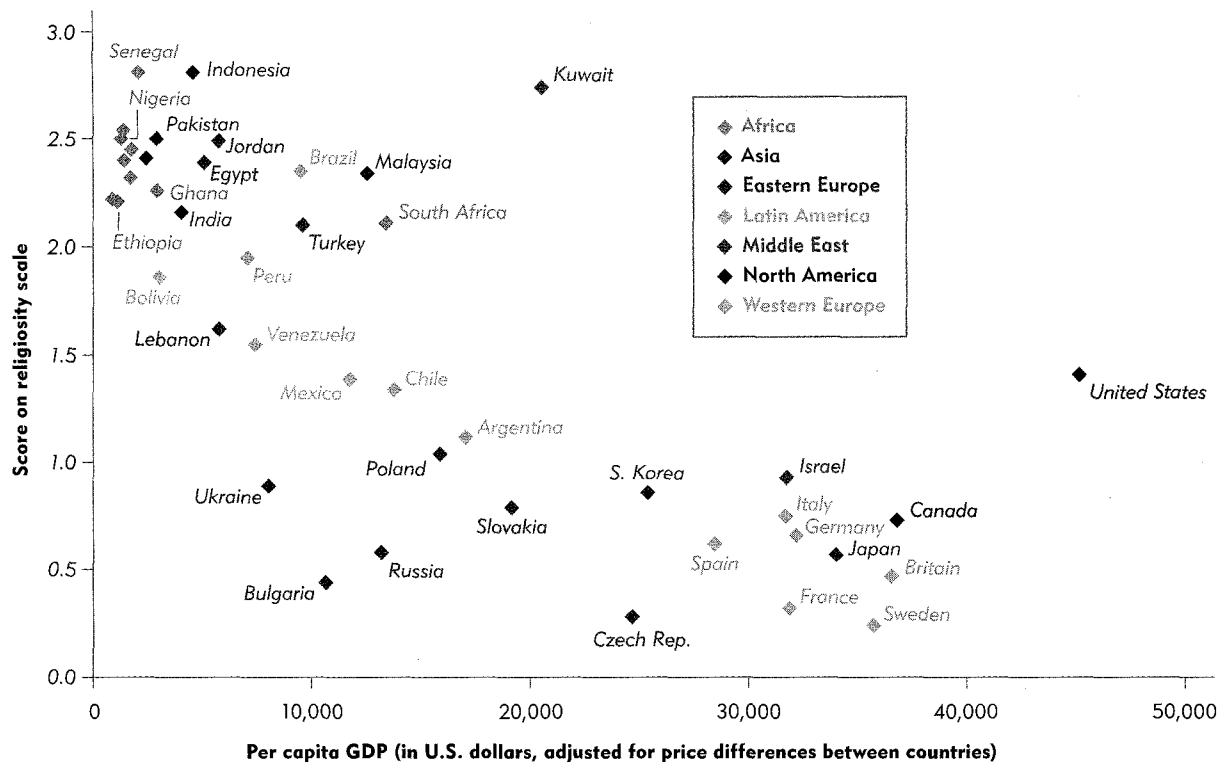
marriage and adoption by gay couples, making it as liberal as Massachusetts. Ireland once gave us, in the form of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, one of the most chilling depictions of damnation in world literature; these days, Dublin's churches are emptying out, and the few parishioners are apt to be Polish immigrants, most of whom presumably came to Ireland to nourish their bank accounts, not their souls.

Eastern Europe lies to the left of western Europe on the graph. Poland is of course well known for its religiosity; the Communists who governed the country for nearly half a century tried to suppress the Church but were ousted by Solidarity, in large part a faith-based movement, with the encouragement of a native-son pope. But most of the countries of eastern Europe, though poorer than their counterparts in the West, are not very different from them in religious terms. And increasing prosperity in eastern Europe may lower religiosity even more. Poland shows signs of this already. The country's outspokenly Catholic prime minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who governed in collaboration with his equally devout twin brother, was defeated late last year by Donald Tusk. Tusk is far less religious in his personal life than the Kaczynskis—he was married in a civil ceremony, and held a church wedding later only to further his political career. During the election campaign, he attacked Kaczynski's ties to a right-wing, ultra-Catholic broadcasting station, and took more-liberal positions on in vitro fertilization and abortion (although he does not support legalized abortion, he opposed a Church-sponsored constitutional amendment to ban it). The first European states to fully embrace secularism did so over hundreds of years. The last holdouts appear to be making the shift in a generation.

Heading up the graph from eastern Europe in comparative religiosity, we arrive at Latin America, a region famous for its piety. Yet secular values are transforming this part of the world, too, and as they do, religiosity is declining. In 2006, Chile—one of Latin America's wealthiest nations—elected Michelle Bachelet, an openly agnostic single mother, as president. Last spring, Mexico City, the capital of the world's second-largest Catholic country, legalized early-term abortions; the law passed in the city's legislative assembly by a vote of 46–19. One cannot ignore the rising cultural and political importance of Pentecostalism in countries ranging from Brazil to Guatemala. But neither can one ignore the growth of an increasingly secular middle class in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, and Peru.

The Asian countries surveyed are scattered around the graph, but they follow the graph's basic pattern (as do Asian countries not included in the graph). Indonesia, one of the poorest countries in the region, is up among the world's most religious ones, and has been the scene of considerable, and considerably gruesome, religious violence. China, a bit

WEALTH AND RELIGIOSITY



richer, is less religious (though even in poorer times, China was not generally given to religious fervor, at least not in the way that Westerners understand the term). India, China's main rival for future domination of the world economy, is also less religious than the continent's poorer countries. It does have a popular political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, that advocates a militant and politicized form of Hinduism. But the BJP, which was part of a coalition that led the government for several years beginning in 1998, lost power in 2004 and has not recovered. Pakistan, India's poorer neighbor, shelters Osama bin Laden and turns out jihadists in droves. But its population is more moderate than many Westerners suppose: its leader, Pervez Musharraf, gets his main support from the military, not the mullahs; and the chief opposition figure, until her assassination in December, was an Oxford- and Harvard-educated woman backed by legions of well-dressed lawyers.

Among the so-called Asian Tigers—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—only South Korea, where Christian fundamentalism is thriving, is known for religiosity. And even there, it has been leveling off in recent years. Japan, the richest nation in Asia, is right where one would expect it to be on the religiosity scale—alongside the godless countries of western Europe.

The Middle East, of course, is the region of greatest concern to many Americans when it comes to religious fervor, for the religion in question is Islam, and Islam, we are told by conservatives of both the neo- and religious

varieties, is an enemy of our way of life. Despite its oil, the Middle East is still relatively poor and only recently urbanized. No one doubts that to arrive there is to pass through the doors of devotion. When Pew asked people whether one must believe in God in order to be moral, the answers in Islamic countries were off the charts: 99 percent of Egyptians and 97 percent of Jordanians, for instance, said yes. Mathematically speaking, it is hard for societies to be more religious than that.

Much has been written about the nourishment that autocracy, on the one hand, and foreign meddling, on the other, have provided to reactionary Islamist movements in the Middle East. Worries about militant Islam often focus on Saudi Arabia, where Islamic fundamentalism really is powerful. The Saudis, moreover, use the considerable cash at their disposal to spread their version of the faith around the world. Given that 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers were citizens of Saudi Arabia, no one should dismiss the dangers of religious fanaticism originating there.

But the Middle East is a huge area, with many forms of religious expression: the notion that Islamic fundamentalism will sweep the entire region is simply not realistic. Consider another set of data collected by Pew: among Lebanese, Turks, Kuwaitis, and Egyptians who see a struggle in their countries between modernizers and fundamentalists, a majority (or, in the case of the Egyptians, a near-majority) say that they identify with the former. It is true that Turkey, one of the world's largest Muslim countries, is

governed by an Islamist party—but that party is both politically and religiously moderate (for example, it favors membership in the European Union). Dubai, one of the richest Muslim countries, is less interested in propagating radical Islam than in attracting gamblers to Las Vegas's MGM Mirage, in which it is a significant shareholder. And even in Saudi Arabia, according to a recent poll by the research organization Terror Free Tomorrow, only 15 percent of the population have a favorable view of Osama bin Laden, and 69 percent support stronger ties with the U.S.

We are left, finally, with Africa. Religiosity there is widely regarded as high, perhaps higher than in the Middle East, but it differs in character. It is in Africa where the predictions of an old-fashioned, broad-based religious revival, with all its attendant conflicts, may come closest to the mark. Much of the commentary on religion's muscle in Africa, and the consequent potential for clashing civilizations, centers on Nigeria, the continent's most populous country and one in which, Pew found, most of those who perceive a struggle between modernizers and fundamentalists put themselves in the latter camp. In recent years, 12 states in northern Nigeria have adopted sharia, or Islamic law, and created special morality police to enforce its tenets. Eliza Griswold explores Africa's religious revival, and in particular the subtleties of the contest between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, elsewhere in this issue. Here, suffice it to say that Africa is indeed in the throes of a great awakening.

Will it endure? A hundred years ago, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber quoted the great evangelical John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church:

I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches.

In 19th-century Europe, as Weber's reference suggests, religious devotion did make people better off materially, and thereby moderated godly fervor. Just because it may have happened that way then does not mean that religion will have the same effect in the developing world now. Yet whether it is faith or some other force that stimulates economic growth in Africa (or Asia or the Middle East), growth is bound to occur, and to continue to moderate religious fervor.

You'll have noticed that I've said nothing yet about the United States. Talk about an outlier—there on the Pew chart it stands, nearly alone, as the only country in the world, apart from Kuwait, that is both wealthy

and religious. Americans are not only more religious than Europeans; they are more religious than the citizens of some Latin American countries. If proof is needed that religion will remain a dominant force in history for a long time to come, the fact that the world's most affluent society is also well up among the faithful would seem to provide it. When the president says that his decision to invade another country was influenced by a call from God, or when school boards decide to include creationism in their curriculum, it appears safe to conclude that Americans are not living in the world envisioned by Marx or Freud.

But one shouldn't go overboard in describing American religiosity. For one thing, it is as shallow as it is broad: Americans know relatively little about the histories, the theological controversies, or even the sacred texts of their chosen faiths. Recent decades have seen the rise of the Christian right in the United States, but they have also witnessed the seemingly inexorable advance of secular ideals, such as personal choice and pluralism, that blossomed in the 1960s. Some signs indicate that the Christian right may be losing steam, or at least moderating, as a political force. Nonbelief, meanwhile, is increasing: not only are atheist manifestos selling in large numbers, but the percentage of those who express no religious preference to pollsters doubled between 1990 and 2001, to 15 percent.

The most important religious phenomenon in the United States, however, has nothing to do with the number of atheists. It concerns another trend that, like modernization, is changing the trajectories of religion worldwide: the creation and spread of a free religious marketplace, which partly (though by no means completely) revives religious devotion wherever it reaches, but also tends to moderate the religions offered within it.

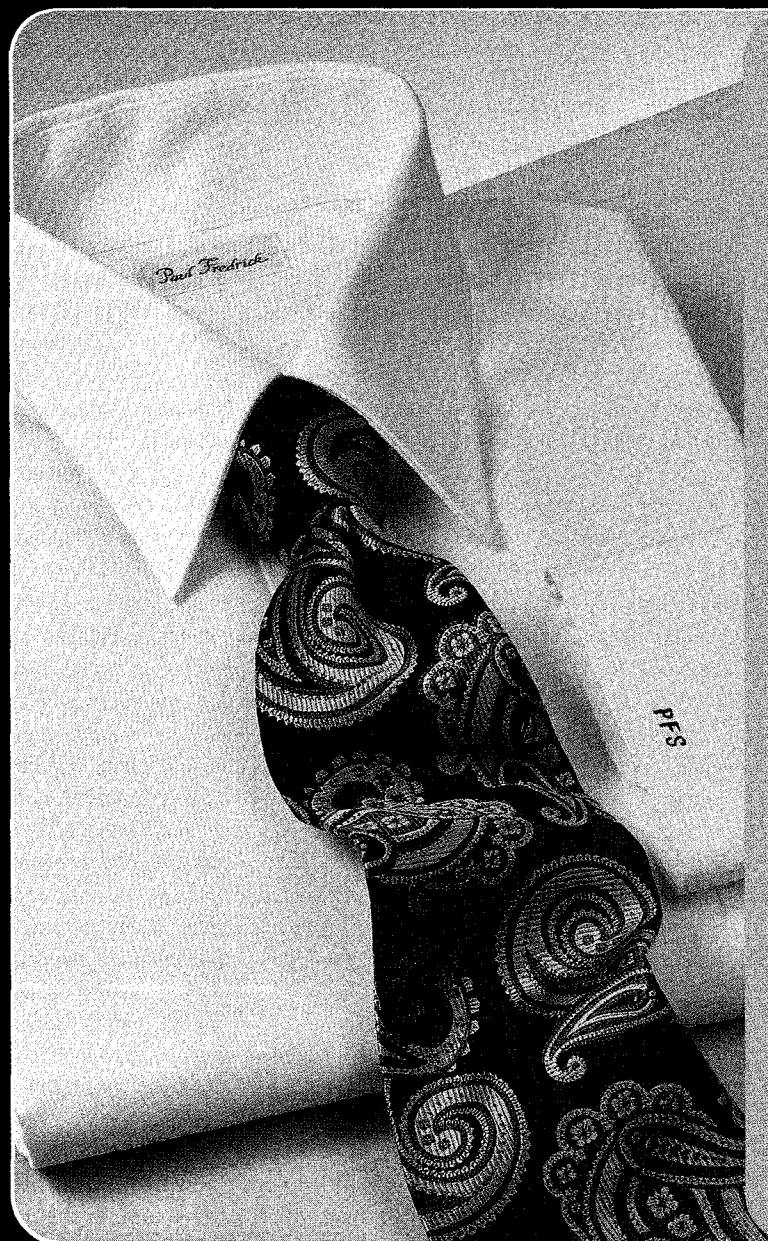
Religious monopolies or near-monopolies, such as state-sponsored churches, generally throttle religious practice over time, especially as a country becomes wealthier; the European experience amply demonstrates this. Lacking any incentive to innovate, churches atrophy, and their congregations dwindle. But places with a free religious marketplace witness something very different: entrepreneurs of the spirit compete to save souls, honing their messages and modulating many of their beliefs so as to appeal to the consumer. With more options to choose from, more consumers find something they like, and the ranks of the religious grow.

The key precondition for this sort of marketplace is the presence of rudimentary secular values. This may sound odd, since the secular has long been thought the opposite of the religious; the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the 1905 French law establishing *laïcité*, or the removal of religion from public affairs, and the creation of modern Turkey were once seen as the replacement of religious orthodoxy by Enlightenment principles. Secularism is still commonly understood in this way:

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a secular society is viewed as one with large numbers of freethinkers choosing science over superstition and reason over revelation.

But secularism is not the opposite of belief; nonbelief is. Indeed, secularism has religious, specifically Christian, roots; it renders unto Caesar what is Caesar's, while leaving to God what properly belongs in his realm. John Locke argued as much in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, first published in 1689: genuine salvation, he wrote, can never be achieved through governmental coercion. In contemporary societies influenced by Lockean ideals, then, religion's priority of belief and secularism's commitment to individual rights are not in opposition; rather, they complement each other. It was once thought that the First Amendment was written to protect public life from the depredations of religious orthodoxy. It is now commonly accepted that the Founders also separated church and state in order to protect religion from government.

So what happens to religions that find themselves with many competitors? Consider what is occurring within the growing American evangelical movement. It has built megachurches that meet the needs of time-pressed professionals by offering such things as day-care centers, self-help groups, and networking opportunities. Its music owes more to Janis Joplin than to Johann Sebastian Bach. Its church officials learn more from business-school case studies than from theological texts. And its young people—well, as the children of parents who have gone through a born-again experience, they are not likely to be as obedient as the evangelical leader James Dobson wants them to be. Having opted to grow on secular terms, American evangelicalism is becoming less hostile to liberal ideas such as tolerance and pluralism. New efforts to take it in directions sympathetic to environmentalism and social justice are a direct result of the maturing of the faith, which followed from earlier decisions to make the movement more appealing to large numbers of Americans, especially the young.

Does the pattern hold outside America? After all, it is often said that the promulgation of secular values and lifestyles, one result of globalization, is prompting a reactionary religious backlash. There is some truth to this argument, but it misses the bigger picture. Most of the religious revivals we are seeing throughout the world today complement, and ultimately reinforce, secular developments; they are more likely to encourage moderation than fanaticism.

Let's look at how global commerce is affecting religion in the developing world. Religious leaders are using advanced media technologies to propagate their message, bringing new religious options and interpretations even to many remote areas. At the same time, globalization is drawing people into the cities, where they must fend for themselves in an unfamiliar environment; in these circumstances, people begin to look to religion not for

instruction in traditional ways of life, but as a means of coming to terms with new experiences. Both developments weaken the hold that local, insular religions have on their adherents, and also make it harder for governmental or clerical authorities to restrict religious choice.

How does this lead to moderation? It doesn't always—rejectionist religious strains can certainly prosper, at least for a time, during periods of intense dislocation. Still, although Jihad may be at war with McWorld, most other forms of religious enthusiasm, including most forms of Islam, are not. Various versions of the prosperity movement are attracting followers in developing countries, as well as in poorer areas of the United States, precisely because they value success in this world as much as holiness in another. These movements can be rightly accused of theological thinness, but not of adherence to old-fashioned doctrine. Their goal is not to question the modern world's riches but to bring them within the reach of more people. And once this dynamic is set in motion, it tends to gather momentum. As Eliza Griswold points out, the success of the Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in Nigeria has prompted the creation of a new Islamic organization focused on economic empowerment, which already has 1.2 million members in Nigeria alone.

In our time, as in Locke's, forcible conversion does not work very well, if at all. One does not spread the good news of the Lord through the bad news of war. As religious leaders recognize that they are more likely to swell their ranks through persuasion than through coercion, they find themselves accepting such secular ideas as free will and individual autonomy. And even religions that are culturally dominant and closely linked with the state must worry about holding on to the allegiance of the young, as well as retaining the loyalties—and the money—of those who have moved abroad and been exposed to religious pluralism and tolerance. As one part of the world becomes modern, those parts it touches also gain exposure to modern ideas. Few places remain where old-fashioned, rigidly dogmatic forms of religion are isolated.

One can see intimations of a pluralistic, American-style religious revival around the world. In Europe, a moderating of fundamentalist extremism, in the name of religious revivalism, may well be under way. Americans worried about the clash of civilizations tend to focus on those forms of Islam called *salafist*, a generic term meant to include those who wish to restore the Muslim faith to the purity it presumably possessed during the era of the Prophet Muhammad. Perhaps they should focus more attention on Muslim religious leaders like Amr Khaled, an Egyptian televangelist now living much of the year in England. Combining idealistic themes of self-empowerment with prosperity movement themes of self-improvement, Khaled appeals to young people in ways that are neither strictly modern nor strictly fundamentalist. So

does Mustafa Hosni, a young Egyptian whose YouTube videos bring messages of self-fulfillment and spiritual renewal to jeans-clad Muslims in both Europe and the Middle East. These secularly influenced forms of Islamic revivalism may not draw huge masses into the streets, but they are exceptionally influential among the well-off, ambitious, and upwardly mobile Muslims who will be leading their countries in the future.

The pattern is similar virtually everywhere we look. Latin Americans are leaving Catholicism because they want the sense of personal empowerment that Pentecostal forms of worship can provide. The preacher and best-selling author Rick Warren is invited to Africa because his ideas about the purpose-driven life, read in the United States as a guide to getting one's personal act together, can be read in that part of the world as encouraging wider, bourgeois virtues of thrift and responsibility. In this light, Pope Benedict's decision to steer Catholicism in a more conservative, traditional direction—a move that effectively forfeits the Church's future in the developed world

willing to adopt Protestant notions about how faith should be practiced in order to gain or retain adherents. During the Second Vatican Council, in the early 1960s, the Catholic Church accepted the idea of religious liberty. Jews in the United States find themselves organized into denominations—Reform, Conservative, Orthodox—in ways that borrow from Protestant traditions. Despite the attention paid to what once were hotbeds of extremism like the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park, significant numbers of Muslims in both North America and western Europe are turning their mosques into all-purpose religious institutions and accepting innovations in gender equality foreign to the practice of Islam in the non-secular past.

What about religions in non-secular environments—can they find ways to live in peace with one another? If not, we have a pretty good idea of what will happen: the Sunni-Shia wars in Iraq, and everyday life in the occupied territories, provide examples enough. Yet because so much of the world is now, if not secular, then moving toward

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in order to expand its appeal in developing regions—seems like a winner only in the short run.

Even in Nigeria, there are signs of accommodation, as Lydia Polgreen of *The New York Times* wrote in a recent report from Kano, one of the states that adopted sharia. The harsher aspects of Islamic law have not been implemented there, and Christians, many of whom had fled the region, are beginning to return. “*Shariah* needs to be practical,” a civil servant in Kano told Polgreen. “We are a developing country, so there is a kind of moderation between the ideas of the West and traditional Islamic values. We try to weigh it so that there is no contradiction.” Those who worry about religious revivals in the world today usually pose an either/or choice between religion and secularism. In reality, the two can work together.

Religious peace will be the single most important consequence of the secular underpinning of today's religious growth. All religions tend to be protective of their traditions and rituals, but all religions also change depending upon the cultural practices of the societies in which they are based. Protestantism and secularism have always had close ties: as noted, Locke was drawing on a specifically Protestant sensibility when he wrote in defense of secular ideals. Other religions in secular environments have shown themselves quite

secularization, the sort of accommodation recently seen in Kano may ultimately take hold in other developing areas as well.

The world will never be rid of fanaticism; globalization is just as capable of disseminating extreme ideas as it is of advancing moderation. But fanaticism should not be confused with religious intensity. One can pray passionately to God and lead an otherwise balanced life, just as one can be monomaniacal about things having nothing to do with the divine.

And religious leaders prone to fanaticism are likely to find that the price of using force to spread God's word, or to try to monopolize it, will be a greatly diminished hold on the future. Moreover, the future may come sooner than we think. We have seen how rapidly religion has spread in the past, claiming adherents from competing faiths before the competition knew what hit them. Both secularism and secularly inspired ways of being religious are spreading just as rapidly—maybe even more so. Historians may one day look back on the next few decades, not as yet another era when religious conflicts enveloped countries and blew apart established societies, but as the era when secularization took over the world. ■

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China's Great Firewall is crude, slapdash, and surprisingly easy to breach. Here's why it's so effective anyway.



'THE CONNECTION

BY JAMES FALLOWS

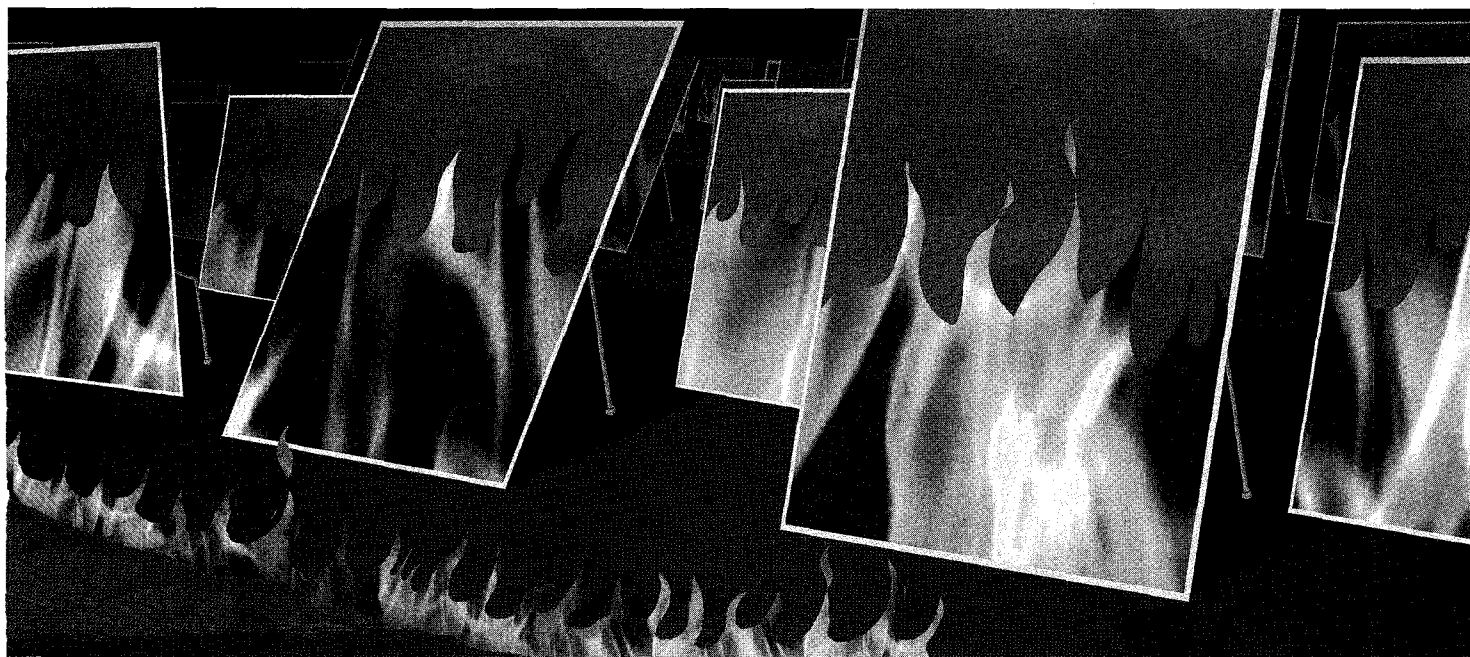
Illustration by John Ritter

Many foreigners who come to China for the Olympics will use the Internet to tell people back home what they have seen and to check what else has happened in the world. ¶ The first thing they'll probably notice is that China's Internet seems slow. Partly this is because of congestion in China's internal networks, which affects domestic and international transmissions alike. Partly it is because even electrons take a detectable period of time to travel beneath the Pacific Ocean to servers in America and back again; the trip to and from Europe is even longer, because that goes through America, too. »

And partly it is because of the delaying cycles imposed by China's system that monitors what people are looking for on the Internet, especially when they're looking overseas. That's what foreigners have heard about.

They'll likely be surprised, then, to notice that China's Internet seems surprisingly free and uncontrolled. Can they search for information about "Tibet independence"

have told them to get ready to unblock access from a list of specific Internet Protocol (IP) addresses—certain Internet cafés, access jacks in hotel rooms and conference centers where foreigners are expected to work or stay during the Olympic Games. (I am not giving names or identifying details of any Chinese citizens with whom I have discussed this topic, because they risk financial or



HAS BEEN RESET?

or "Tiananmen shooting" or other terms they have heard are taboo? Probably—and they'll be able to click right through to the controversial sites. Even if they enter the Chinese-language term for "democracy in China," they'll probably get results. What about Wikipedia, famously off-limits to users in China? They will probably be able to reach it. Naturally the visitors will wonder: What's all this I've heard about the "Great Firewall" and China's tight limits on the Internet?

In reality, what the Olympic-era visitors will be discovering is not the absence of China's electronic control but its new refinement—and a special Potemkin-style unfettered access that will be set up just for them, and just for the length of their stay. According to engineers I have spoken with at two tech organizations in China, the government bodies in charge of censoring the Internet

criminal punishment for criticizing the system or even disclosing how it works. Also, I have not gone to Chinese government agencies for their side of the story, because the very existence of Internet controls is almost never discussed in public here, apart from vague statements about the importance of keeping online information "wholesome.")

Depending on how you look at it, the Chinese government's attempt to rein in the Internet is crude and slapdash or ingenious and well crafted. When American technologists write about the control system, they tend to emphasize its limits. When Chinese citizens discuss it—at least with me—they tend to emphasize its strength. All of them are right, which makes the

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For an interview with James Fallows,
visit www.theatlantic.com/firewall.

government's approach to the Internet a nice proxy for its larger attempt to control people's daily lives.

Disappointingly, "Great Firewall" is not really the right term for the Chinese government's overall control strategy. China has indeed erected a firewall—a barrier to keep its Internet users from dealing easily with the outside world—but that is only one part of a larger, complex structure of monitoring and censorship. The official name for the entire approach, which is ostensibly a way to keep hackers and other rogue elements from harming Chinese Internet users, is the "Golden Shield Project." Since that term is too creepy to bear repeating, I'll use "the control system" for the overall strategy, which includes the "Great Firewall of China," or GFW, as the means of screening contact with other countries.

In America, the Internet was originally designed to be free of choke points, so that each packet of information could be routed quickly around any temporary obstruction. In China, the Internet came with choke points built in. Even now, virtually all Internet contact between China and the rest of the world is routed through a very small number of fiber-optic cables that enter the country at one of three points: the Beijing-Qingdao-Tianjin area in the north, where cables come in from Japan; Shanghai on the central coast, where they also come from Japan; and Guangzhou in the south, where they come from Hong Kong. (A few places in China have Internet service via satellite, but that is both expensive and slow. Other lines run across Central Asia to Russia but carry little traffic.) In late 2006, Internet users in China were reminded just how important these choke points are when a seabed earthquake near Taiwan cut some major cables serving the country. It took months before international transmissions to and from most of China regained even their pre-quake speed, such as it was.

Thus Chinese authorities can easily do something that would be harder in most developed countries: physically monitor all traffic into or out of the country. They do so by installing at each of these few "international gateways" a device called a "tapper" or "network sniffer," which can mirror every packet of data going in or out. This involves mirroring in both a figurative and a literal sense. "Mirroring" is the term for normal copying or backup operations, and in this case real though extremely small mirrors are employed. Information travels along fiber-optic cables as little pulses of light, and as these travel through the Chinese gateway routers, numerous tiny mirrors bounce reflections of them to a separate set of "Golden Shield" computers. Here the term's creepiness is appropriate. As the other routers and servers (short for file servers, which are essentially very large-capacity computers) that make up the Internet do their best to get the packet where it's supposed to go, China's own surveillance computers are looking over the same information to see whether it should be stopped.

The mirroring routers were first designed and supplied to the Chinese authorities by the U.S. tech firm Cisco, which is why Cisco took such heat from human-rights organizations. Cisco has always denied that it tailored its equipment to the authorities' surveillance needs, and said it merely sold them what it would sell anyone else. The issue is now moot, since similar routers are made by companies around the world, notably including China's own electronics giant, Huawei. The ongoing refinements are mainly in surveillance software, which the Chinese are developing themselves. Many of the surveillance engineers are thought to come from the military's own technology institutions. Their work is good and getting better, I was told by Chinese and foreign engineers who do "oppo research" on the evolving GFW so as to design better ways to get around it.

Andrew Lih, a former journalism professor and software engineer now based in Beijing (and author of the forthcoming book *The Wikipedia Story*), laid out for me the ways in which the GFW can keep a Chinese Internet user from finding desired material on a foreign site. In the few seconds after a user enters a request at the browser, and before something new shows up on the screen, at least four things can go wrong—or be made to go wrong.

The first and bluntest is the "DNS block." The DNS, or Domain Name System, is in effect the telephone directory of Internet sites. Each time you enter a Web address, or URL—www.yahoo.com, let's say—the DNS looks up the IP address where the site can be found. IP addresses are numbers separated by dots—for example, TheAtlantic.com's is 38.118.42.200. If the DNS is instructed to give back no address, or a bad address, the user can't reach the site in question—as a phone user could not make a call if given a bad number. Typing in the URL for the BBC's main news site often gets the no-address treatment: if you try news.bbc.co.uk, you may get a "Site not found" message on the screen. For two months in 2002, Google's Chinese site, Google.cn, got a different kind of bad-address treatment, which shunted users to its main competitor, the dominant Chinese search engine, Baidu. Chinese academics complained that this was hampering their work. The government, which does not have to stand for reelection but still tries not to antagonize important groups needlessly, let Google.cn back online. During politically sensitive times, like last fall's 17th Communist Party Congress, many foreign sites have been temporarily shut down this way.

Next is the perilous "connect" phase. If the DNS has looked up and provided the right IP address, your computer sends a signal requesting a connection with that remote site. While your signal is going out, and as the other system is sending a reply, the surveillance computers within China are looking over your request, which has been mirrored to them. They quickly check a list of forbidden IP sites. If you're trying to reach one on that blacklist, the

Chinese international-gateway servers will interrupt the transmission by sending an Internet "Reset" command both to your computer and to the one you're trying to reach. Reset is a perfectly routine Internet function, which is used to repair connections that have become unsynchronized. But in this case it's equivalent to forcing the phones on each end of a conversation to hang up. Instead of the site you want, you usually see an onscreen message beginning "The connection has been reset"; sometimes instead you get "Site not found." Annoyingly, blogs hosted by the popular system Blogspot are on this IP blacklist. For a typical Google-type search, many of the links shown on the results page are from Wikipedia or one of these main blog sites. You will see these links when you search from inside China, but if you click on them, you won't get what you want.

The third barrier comes with what Lih calls "URL keyword block." The numerical Internet address you are trying to reach might not be on the blacklist. But if the words in its URL include forbidden terms, the connection will also be reset. (The Uniform Resource Locator is a site's address in plain English—say, www.microsoft.com—

against its list of forbidden terms. If it finds something it doesn't like, it breaks the connection to the offending site and won't let you download anything further from it. The GFW then imposes a temporary blackout on further "IP1 to IP2" attempts—that is, efforts to establish communications between the user and the offending site. Usually the first time-out is for two minutes. If the user tries to reach the site during that time, a five-minute time-out might begin. On a third try, the time-out might be 30 minutes or an hour—and so on through an escalating sequence of punishments.

Users who try hard enough or often enough to reach the wrong sites might attract the attention of the authorities. At least in principle, Chinese Internet users must sign in with their real names whenever they go online, even in Internet cafés. When the surveillance system flags an IP address from which a lot of "bad" searches originate, the authorities have a good chance of knowing who is sitting at that machine.

All of this adds a note of unpredictability to each attempt to get news from outside China. One day you

In the few seconds after a user enters a request and before something new shows up on the screen, at least four things can go wrong—or be made to go wrong.

rather than its all-numeric IP address.) The site FalunGong.com appears to have no active content, but even if it did, Internet users in China would not be able to see it. The forbidden list contains words in English, Chinese, and other languages, and is frequently revised—"like, with the name of the latest town with a coal mine disaster," as Lih put it. Here the GFW's programming technique is not a reset command but a "black-hole loop," in which a request for a page is trapped in a sequence of delaying commands. These are the programming equivalent of the old saw about how to keep an idiot busy: you take a piece of paper and write "Please turn over" on each side. When the Firefox browser detects that it is in this kind of loop, it gives an error message saying: "The server is redirecting the request for this address in a way that will never complete."

The final step involves the newest and most sophisticated part of the GFW: scanning the actual contents of each page—which stories *The New York Times* is featuring, what a China-related blog carries in its latest update—to judge its page-by-page acceptability. This again is done with mirrors. When you reach a favorite blog or news site and ask to see particular items, the requested pages come to you—and to the surveillance system at the same time. The GFW scanner checks the content of each item

go to the NPR site and cruise around with no problem. The next time, NPR happens to have done a feature on Tibet. The GFW immobilizes the site. If you try to refresh the page or click through to a new story, you'll get nothing—and the time-out clock will start.

This approach is considered a subtler and more refined form of censorship, since big foreign sites no longer need be blocked wholesale. In principle they're in trouble only when they cover the wrong things. Xiao Qiang, an expert on Chinese media at the University of California at Berkeley journalism school, told me that the authorities have recently begun applying this kind of filtering in reverse. As Chinese-speaking people outside the country, perhaps academics or exiled dissidents, look for data on Chinese sites—say, public-health figures or news about a local protest—the GFW computers can monitor what they're asking for and censor what they find.

Taken together, the components of the control system share several traits. They're constantly evolving and changing in their emphasis, as new surveillance techniques become practical and as words go on and off the sensitive list. They leave the Chinese Internet public unsure about where the off-limits line will be drawn on any given day. Andrew Lih points out that other countries that also censor Internet content—Singapore, for instance, or the United

Arab Emirates—provide explanations whenever they do so. Someone who clicks on a pornographic or “anti-Islamic” site in the U.A.E. gets the following message, in Arabic and English: “We apologize the site you are attempting to visit has been blocked due to its content being inconsistent with the religious, cultural, political, and moral values of the United Arab Emirates.” In China, the connection just times out. Is it your computer’s problem? The firewall? Or maybe your local Internet provider, which has decided to do some filtering on its own? You don’t know. “The unpredictability of the firewall actually makes it more effective,” another Chinese software engineer told me. “It becomes much harder to know what the system is looking for, and you always have to be on guard.”

There is one more similarity among the components of the firewall: they are all easy to thwart.

As a practical matter, anyone in China who wants to get around the firewall can choose between two well-known and dependable alternatives: the proxy server and the VPN. A proxy server is a way of connecting your computer inside China with another one somewhere else—or

As a technical matter, China could crack down on the proxies and VPNs whenever it pleased. Today the policy is: if a message comes through that the surveillance system cannot read because it’s encrypted, let’s wave it on through! Obviously the system’s behavior could be reversed. But everyone I spoke with said that China could simply not afford to crack down that way. “Every bank, every foreign manufacturing company, every retailer, every software vendor needs VPNs to exist,” a Chinese professor told me. “They would have to shut down the next day if asked to send their commercial information through the regular Chinese Internet and the Great Firewall.” Closing down the free, easy-to-use proxy servers would create a milder version of the same problem. Encrypted e-mail, too, passes through the GFW without scrutiny, and users of many Web-based mail systems can establish a secure session simply by typing “https:” rather than the usual “http:” in a site’s address—for instance, <https://mail.yahoo.com>. To keep China in business, then, the government has to allow some exceptions to its control efforts—even knowing that many Chinese citizens will exploit the resulting loopholes.

Is it your computer’s problem? The firewall? Or maybe your local Internet provider, which has decided to do some filtering on its own? You don’t know.

usually to a series of foreign computers, automatically passing signals along to conceal where they really came from. You initiate a Web request, and the proxy system takes over, sending it to a computer in America or Finland or Brazil. Eventually the system finds what you want and sends it back. The main drawback is that it makes Internet operations very, very slow. But because most proxies cost nothing to install and operate, this is the favorite of students and hackers in China.

A VPN, or virtual private network, is a faster, fancier, and more elegant way to achieve the same result. Essentially a VPN creates your own private, encrypted channel that runs alongside the normal Internet. From within China, a VPN connects you with an Internet server somewhere else. You pass your browsing and downloading requests to that American or Finnish or Japanese server, and it finds and sends back what you’re looking for. The GFW doesn’t stop you, because it can’t read the encrypted messages you’re sending. Every foreign business operating in China uses such a network. VPNs are freely advertised in China, so individuals can sign up, too. I use one that costs \$40 per year. (An expat in China thinks: *that’s a little over a dime a day*. A Chinese factory worker thinks: *it’s a week’s take-home pay*. Even for a young academic, it’s a couple days’ work.)

Because the Chinese government can’t plug every gap in the Great Firewall, many American observers have concluded that its larger efforts to control electronic discussion, and the democratization and grass-roots organizing it might nurture, are ultimately doomed. A recent item on an influential American tech Web site had the headline “Chinese National Firewall Isn’t All That Effective.” In October, *Wired* ran a story under the headline “The Great Firewall: China’s Misguided—and Futile—Attempt to Control What Happens Online.”

Let’s not stop to discuss why the vision of democracy-through-communications-technology is so convincing to so many Americans. (Samizdat, fax machines, and the Voice of America eventually helped bring down the Soviet system. Therefore proxy servers and online chat rooms must erode the power of the Chinese state. Right?) Instead, let me emphasize how unconvincing this vision is to most people who deal with China’s system of extensive, if imperfect, Internet controls.

Think again of the real importance of the Great Firewall. Does the Chinese government really care if a citizen can look up the Tiananmen Square entry on Wikipedia? Of course not. Anyone who wants that information will get it—by using a proxy server or VPN, by e-mailing to a friend overseas, even by looking at the surprisingly broad

array of foreign magazines that arrive, uncensored, in Chinese public libraries.

What the government cares about is making the quest for information just enough of a nuisance that people generally won't bother. Most Chinese people, like most Americans, are interested mainly in their own country. All around them is more information about China and things Chinese than they could possibly take in. The newsstands are bulging with papers and countless glossy magazines. The bookstores are big, well stocked, and full of patrons, and so are the public libraries. Video stores, with pirated versions of anything. Lots of TV channels. And of course the Internet, where sites in Chinese and about China constantly proliferate. When this much is available inside the Great Firewall, why go to the expense and bother, or incur the possible risk, of trying to look outside?

All the technology employed by the Golden Shield, all the marvelous mirrors that help build the Great Firewall—these and other modern achievements matter mainly for an old-fashioned and pre-technological reason. By making the search for external information a nuisance, they drive Chinese people back to an environment in which familiar tools of social control come into play.

Chinese bloggers have learned that if they want to be read in China, they must operate within China, on the same side of the firewall as their potential audience. Sure, they could put up exactly the same information outside the Chinese mainland. But according to Rebecca MacKinnon, a former Beijing correspondent for CNN now at the Journalism and Media Studies Center of the University of Hong Kong, their readers won't make the effort to cross the GFW and find them. "If you want to have traction in China, you have to *be* in China," she told me. And being inside China means operating under the sweeping rules that govern all forms of media here: guidance from the authorities; the threat of financial ruin or time in jail; the unavoidable self-censorship as the cost of defiance sinks in.

Most blogs in China are hosted by big Internet companies. Those companies know that the government will hold them responsible if a blogger says something bad. Thus the companies, for their own survival, are dragooned into service as auxiliary censors.

Large teams of paid government censors delete offensive comments and warn errant bloggers. (No official figures are available, but the censor workforce is widely assumed to number in the tens of thousands.) Members of the public at large are encouraged to speak up when they see subversive material. The propaganda ministries send out frequent instructions about what can and cannot be discussed. In October, the group Reporters Without Borders, based in Paris, released an astonishing report by a Chinese Internet technician writing under the pseudonym "Mr. Tao." He collected dozens of the

messages he and other Internet operators had received from the central government. Here is just one, from the summer of 2006:

17 June 2006, 18:35

From: Chen Hua, deputy director of the Beijing Internet Information Administrative Bureau

Dear colleagues, the Internet has of late been full of articles and messages about the death of a Shenzhen engineer, Hu Xinyu, as a result of overwork. All sites must stop posting articles on this subject, those that have already been posted about it must be removed from the site and, finally, forums and blogs must withdraw all articles and messages about this case.

"Domestic censorship is the real issue, and it is about social control, human surveillance, peer pressure, and self-censorship," Xiao Qiang of Berkeley says. Last fall, a team of computer scientists from the University of California at Davis and the University of New Mexico published an exhaustive technical analysis of the GFW's operation and of the ways it could be foiled. But they stressed a nontechnical factor: "The presence of censorship, even if easy to evade, promotes self-censorship."

It would be wrong to portray China as a tightly buttoned mind-control state. It is too wide-open in too many ways for that. "Most people in China feel freer than any Chinese people have been in the country's history, ever," a Chinese software engineer who earned a doctorate in the United States told me. "There has never been a space for any kind of discussion before, and the government is clever about continuing to expand space for anything that doesn't threaten its survival." But it would also be wrong to ignore the cumulative effect of topics people are not allowed to discuss. "Whether or not Americans supported George W. Bush, they could not *avoid* learning about Abu Ghraib," Rebecca MacKinnon says. In China, "the controls mean that whole topics inconvenient for the regime simply don't exist in public discussion." Most Chinese people remain wholly unaware of internationally noticed issues like, for instance, the controversy over the Three Gorges Dam.

Countless questions about today's China boil down to: How long can this go on? How long can the industrial growth continue before the natural environment is destroyed? How long can the super-rich get richer, without the poor getting mad? And so on through a familiar list. The Great Firewall poses the question in another form: How long can the regime control what people are allowed to know, without the people caring enough to object? On current evidence, for quite a while. ▀

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The subprime crisis is just the tip of the iceberg. Fundamental changes in American life may turn today's McMansions into tomorrow's tenements.

BY CHRISTOPHER B. LEINBERGER



The Next Slum?

Strange days are upon the residents of many a suburban cul-de-sac. Once-tidy yards have become overgrown, as the houses they front have gone vacant. Signs of physical and social disorder are spreading. ¶ At Windy Ridge, a recently built starter-home development seven miles northwest of Charlotte, North Carolina, 81 of the community's 132 small, vinyl-sided houses were in foreclosure as of late last year. Vandals have kicked in doors and stripped the copper wire from vacant houses; drug users and homeless people have furtively moved in. In December, after a stray bullet blasted through her son's bedroom and into her own, Laurie Talbot, who'd moved to Windy Ridge from New York in 2005, told *The Charlotte Observer*,

"I thought I'd bought a home in Pleasantville. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that stuff like this would happen."

In the Franklin Reserve neighborhood of Elk Grove, California, south of Sacramento, the houses are nicer than those at Windy Ridge—many once sold for well over \$500,000—but the phenomenon is the same. At the height of the boom, 10,000 new homes were built there in just four years. Now many are empty; renters of dubious character occupy others. Graffiti, broken windows, and other markers of decay have multiplied. Susan McDonald, president of the local residents' association and an executive at a local bank, told the Associated Press, "There's been gang activity. Things have really been changing, the last few years."

In the first half of last year, residential burglaries rose by 35 percent and robberies by 58 percent in suburban Lee County, Florida, where one in four houses stands empty. Charlotte's crime rates have stayed flat overall in recent years—but from 2003 to 2006, in the 10 suburbs of the city that have experienced the highest foreclosure rates, crime rose 33 percent. Civic organizations in some suburbs have begun to mow the lawns around empty houses to keep up the appearance of stability. Police departments are mapping foreclosures in an effort to identify emerging criminal hot spots.

The decline of places like Windy Ridge and Franklin Reserve is usually attributed to the subprime-mortgage crisis, with its wave of foreclosures. And the crisis has indeed catalyzed or intensified social problems in many communities. But the story of vacant suburban homes and declining suburban neighborhoods did not begin with the crisis, and will not end with it. A structural change is under way in the housing market—a major shift in the way many Americans want to live and work. It has shaped the current downturn, steering some of the worst problems away from the cities and toward the suburban fringes. And its effects will be felt more strongly, and more broadly,

as the years pass. Its ultimate impact on the suburbs, and the cities, will be profound.

Arthur C. Nelson, director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, has looked carefully at trends in American demographics, construction, house prices, and consumer preferences. In 2006, using recent consumer research, housing supply data, and population growth rates, he modeled future demand for various types of housing. The results were bracing: Nelson forecasts a likely surplus of 22 million large-lot homes (houses built on a sixth of an acre or more) by 2025—that's roughly 40 percent of the large-lot homes in existence today.

For 60 years, Americans have pushed steadily into the suburbs, transforming the landscape and (until recently) leaving cities behind. But today the pendulum is swinging back toward urban living, and there are many reasons to believe this swing will continue. As it does, many low-density suburbs and McMansion subdivisions, including some that are lovely and affluent today, may become what inner cities became in the 1960s and '70s—slums characterized by poverty, crime, and decay.

The suburban dream began, arguably, at the New York World's Fair of 1939 and '40. "Highways and Horizons," better known as "Futurama," was overwhelmingly the fair's most popular exhibit; perhaps 10 percent of the American population saw it. At the heart of the exhibit was a scale model, covering an area about the size of a football field, that showed what American cities and towns might look like in 1960. Visitors watched matchbox-sized cars zip down wide highways. Gone were the crowded tenements of the time; 1960s Americans would live in stand-alone houses with spacious yards and attached garages. The exhibit would not impress us today, but at the time, it inspired wonder. E. B. White wrote in *Harper's*, "A ride on the Futurama ... induces approximately the same emotional response as a trip through the Cathedral of St. John the Divine ... I didn't want to wake up."

The suburban transformation that began in 1946, as GIs returned home, took almost half a century to complete, as first people, then retail, then jobs moved out of cities and into new subdivisions, malls, and office parks. As families decamped for the suburbs, they left behind out-of-fashion real estate, a poorer residential base, and rising crime. Once-thriving central-city retail districts were killed off by the combination of regional suburban malls and the 1960s riots. By the end of the 1970s, people seeking safety and good schools generally had little alternative but to move to the suburbs. In 1981, *Escape From New York*, starring Kurt Russell, depicted a near future in which Manhattan had been abandoned, fenced off, and turned into an unsupervised penitentiary.

Cities, of course, have made a long climb back since then. Just nine years after Russell escaped from the wreck of New York, *Seinfeld*—followed by *Friends*, then *Sex and the City*—began advertising the city's renewed urban allure to Gen-Xers and Millennials. Many Americans, meanwhile, became disillusioned with the sprawl and storpor that sometimes characterize suburban life. These days,

percent more than traditional suburban space in areas as diverse as New York City; Portland, Oregon; Seattle; and Washington, D.C.

It's crucial to note that these premiums have arisen not only in central cities, but also in suburban towns that have walkable urban centers offering a mix of residential and commercial development. For instance, luxury single-family homes in suburban Westchester County, just north of New York City, sell for \$375 a square foot. A luxury condo in downtown White Plains, the county's biggest suburban city, can cost you \$750 a square foot. This same pattern can be seen in the suburbs of Detroit, or outside Seattle. People are being drawn to the convenience and culture of walkable urban neighborhoods across the country—even when those neighborhoods are small.

Builders and developers tend to notice big price imbalances, and they are working to accommodate demand for urban living. New lofts and condo complexes have popped up all over many big cities. Suburban towns built in the 19th and early 20th centuries, featuring downtown street grids at their core, have seen a good deal of "in-filling" in

As more Americans, particularly affluent Americans, move into urban communities, families may find that some of the suburbs' big advantages have eroded.

when Hollywood wants to portray soullessness, despair, or moral decay, it often looks to the suburbs—as *The Sopranos* and *Desperate Housewives* attest—for inspiration.

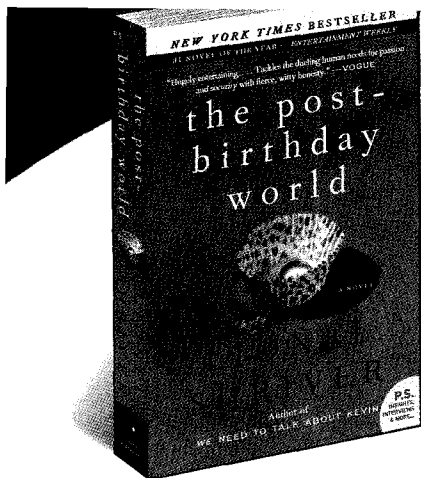
In the past decade, as cities have gentrified, the suburbs have continued to grow at a breakneck pace. Atlanta's sprawl has extended nearly to Chattanooga; Fort Worth and Dallas have merged; and Los Angeles has swung a leg over the 10,000-foot San Gabriel Mountains into the Mojave Desert. Some experts expect conventional suburbs to continue to sprawl ever outward. Yet today, American metropolitan residential patterns and cultural preferences are mirror opposites of those in the 1940s. Most Americans now live in single-family suburban houses that are segregated from work, shopping, and entertainment; but it is urban life, almost exclusively, that is culturally associated with excitement, freedom, and diverse daily life. And as in the 1940s, the real-estate market has begun to react.

Pent-up demand for urban living is evident in housing prices. Twenty years ago, urban housing was a bargain in most central cities. Today, it carries an enormous price premium. Per square foot, urban residential neighborhood space goes for 40 percent to 200

recent years as well, with new condos and town houses, and renovated small-lot homes just outside their downtowns. And while urban construction may slow for a time because of the present housing bust, it will surely continue. Sprawling, large-lot suburbs become less attractive as they become more densely built, but urban areas—especially those well served by public transit—become more appealing as they are filled in and built up. Crowded sidewalks tend to be safe and lively, and bigger crowds can support more shops, restaurants, art galleries.

But developers are also starting to find ways to bring the city to newer suburbs—and provide an alternative to conventional, car-based suburban life. "Lifestyle centers"—walkable developments that create an urban feel, even when built in previously undeveloped places—are becoming popular with some builders. They feature narrow streets and small storefronts that come up to the sidewalk, mixed in with housing and office space. Parking is mostly hidden underground or in the interior of faux city blocks.

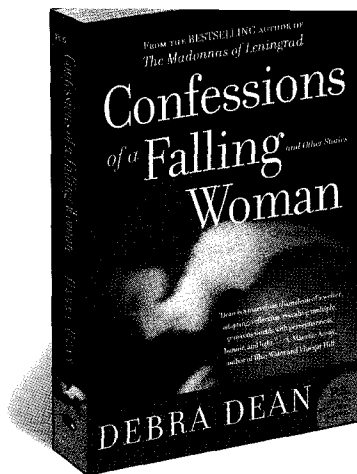
The granddaddy of all lifestyle centers is the Reston Town Center, located between Virginia's Dulles International Airport and Washington, D.C. Since it opened in 1990, it has become the "downtown" for western Fairfax



A Time magazine
Best Book of the Year

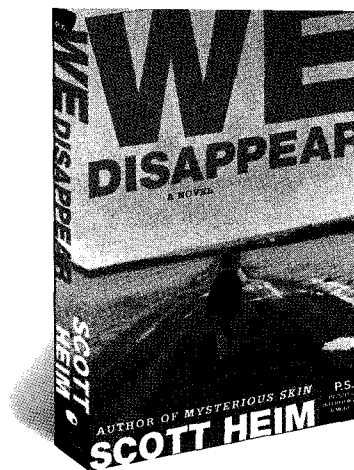
"Provocative...as unflinching as they come."
—*New York Times*

"Fascinating...a writer with heart and a sly sense of humor."
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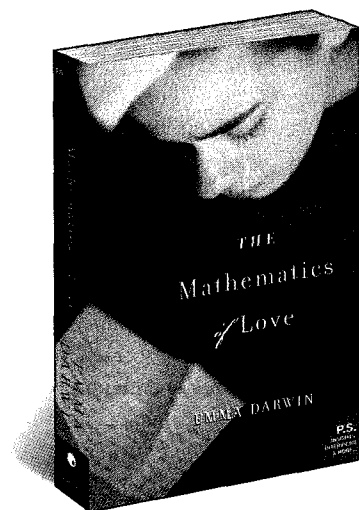
"Dean is a marvelous chameleon of a writer, adapting, reflecting, revealing multiple, generous worlds with perceptiveness, humor and light."
—A. Manette Ansay



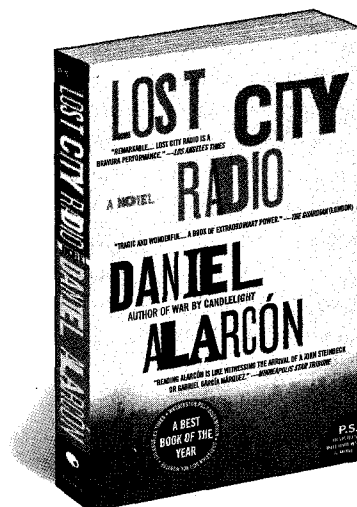
A Book Sense Pick from the
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"Strange and luminous, this fascinating thriller tackles questions of identity, illness, and trauma.... Taut and beautifully clear, the writing at times recalls that of Paul Auster."
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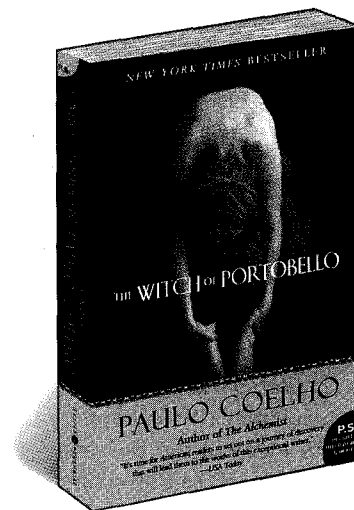


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and eastern Loudoun counties; a place for the kids to see Santa and for teenagers to ice skate. People living in the town can stroll from the movie theater to restaurants and then back home. A 2006 study by the Brookings Institution showed that Reston's apartments, condominiums, and office and retail space were all commanding about a 50 percent rent or price premium over the typically suburban houses, office parks, and strip malls nearby.

Housing at Belmar, the new "downtown" in Lakewood, Colorado, a middle-income inner suburb of Denver, commands a 60 percent premium per square foot over the single-family homes in the neighborhoods around it. The development covers about 20 small blocks in all. What's most noteworthy is its history: it was built on the site of a razed mall.

Building lifestyle centers is far more complex than building McMansion developments (or malls). These new,

Demographic changes in the United States also are working against conventional suburban growth, and are likely to further weaken preferences for car-based suburban living. When the Baby Boomers were young, families with children made up more than half of all households; by 2000, they were only a third of households; and by 2025, they will be closer to a quarter. Young people are starting families later than earlier generations did, and having fewer children. The Boomers themselves are becoming empty-nesters, and many have voiced a preference for urban living. By 2025, the U.S. will contain about as many single-person households as families with children.

Because the population is growing, families with children will still grow in absolute number—according to U.S. Census data, there will be about 4 million more households with children in 2025 than there were in 2000. But more

The fate of many homes on the metropolitan fringes will be resale, at rock-bottom prices, to lower-income families—and eventual conversion to apartments.

faux-urban centers have many moving parts, and they need to achieve critical mass quickly to attract buyers and retailers. As a result, during the 1990s, lifestyle centers spread slowly. But real-estate developers are gaining more experience with this sort of building, and it is proliferating. Very few, if any, regional malls are being built these days—lifestyle centers are going up instead.

In most metropolitan areas, only 5 to 10 percent of the housing stock is located in walkable urban places (including places like downtown White Plains and Belmar). Yet recent consumer research by Jonathan Levine of the University of Michigan and Lawrence Frank of the University of British Columbia suggests that roughly one in three homeowners would prefer to live in these types of places. In one study, for instance, Levine and his colleagues asked more than 1,600 mostly suburban residents of the Atlanta and Boston metro areas to hypothetically trade off typical suburban amenities (such as large living spaces) against typical urban ones (like living within walking distance of retail districts). All in all, they found that only about a third of the people surveyed solidly preferred traditional suburban lifestyles, featuring large houses and lots of driving. Another third, roughly, had mixed feelings. The final third wanted to live in mixed-use, walkable urban areas—but most had no way to do so at an affordable price. Over time, as urban and faux-urban building continues, that will change.

than 10 million new single-family homes have already been built since 2000, most of them in the suburbs.

If gasoline and heating costs continue to rise, conventional suburban living may not be much of a bargain in the future. And as more Americans, particularly affluent Americans, move into urban communities, families may find that some of the suburbs' other big advantages—better schools and safer communities—have eroded. Schooling and safety are likely to improve in urban areas, as those areas continue to gentrify; they may worsen in many suburbs if the tax base—often highly dependent on house values and new development—deteriorates. Many of the fringe counties in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, for instance, are projecting big budget deficits in 2008. Only Washington itself is expecting a large surplus. Fifteen years ago, this budget situation was reversed.

The U.S. grows its total stock of housing and commercial space by, at most, 3 percent each year, so the imbalance between the supply of urban living options and the demand for them is not going to disappear overnight. But over the next 20 years, developers will likely produce many, many millions of new and newly renovated town houses, condos, and small-lot houses in and around both new and traditional downtowns.

As conventional suburban lifestyles fall out of fashion and walkable urban alternatives proliferate, what will happen to obsolete large-lot houses? One might imagine

culs-de-sac being converted to faux Main Streets, or McMansion developments being bulldozed and reforested or turned into parks. But these sorts of transformations are likely to be rare. Suburbia's many small parcels of land, held by different owners with different motivations, make the purchase of whole neighborhoods almost unheard-of. Condemnation of single-family housing for "higher and better use" is politically difficult, and in most states it has become almost legally impossible in recent years. In any case, the infrastructure supporting large-lot suburban residential areas—roads, sewer and water lines—cannot support the dense development that urbanization would require, and is not easy to upgrade. Once large-lot, suburban residential landscapes are built, they are hard to unbuild.

The experience of cities during the 1950s through the '80s suggests that the fate of many single-family homes on the metropolitan fringes will be resale, at rock-bottom prices, to lower-income families—and in all likelihood, eventual conversion to apartments.

This future is not likely to wear well on suburban housing. Many of the inner-city neighborhoods that began their decline in the 1960s consisted of sturdily built, turn-of-the-century row houses, tough enough to withstand being broken up into apartments, and requiring relatively little upkeep. By comparison, modern suburban houses, even high-end McMansions, are cheaply built. Hollow doors and wallboard are less durable than solid-oak doors and lath-and-plaster walls. The plywood floors that lurk under wood veneers or carpeting tend to break up and warp as the glue that holds the wood together dries out; asphalt-shingle roofs typically need replacing after 10 years. Many recently built houses take what structural integrity they have from drywall—their thin wooden frames are too flimsy to hold the houses up.

As the residents of inner-city neighborhoods did before them, suburban homeowners will surely try to prevent the division of neighborhood houses into rental units, which would herald the arrival of the poor. And many will likely succeed, for a time. But eventually, the owners of these fringe houses will have to sell to someone, and they're not likely to find many buyers; offers from would-be landlords will start to look better, and neighborhood restrictions will relax. Stopping a fundamental market shift by legislation or regulation is generally impossible.

Of course, not all suburbs will suffer this fate. Those that are affluent and relatively close to central cities—especially those along rail lines—are likely to remain in high demand. Some, especially those that offer a thriving, walkable urban core, may find that even the large-lot, residential-only neighborhoods around that core increase in value. Single-family homes next to the downtowns

of Redmond, Washington; Evanston, Illinois; and Birmingham, Michigan, for example, are likely to hold their values just fine.

On the other hand, many inner suburbs that are on the wrong side of town, and poorly served by public transport, are already suffering what looks like inexorable decline. Low-income people, displaced from gentrifying inner cities, have moved in, and longtime residents, seeking more space and nicer neighborhoods, have moved out.

But much of the future decline is likely to occur on the fringes, in towns far away from the central city, not served by rail transit, and lacking any real core. In other words, some of the worst problems are likely to be seen in some of the country's more recently developed areas—and not only those inhabited by subprime-mortgage borrowers. Many of these areas will become magnets for poverty, crime, and social dysfunction.

Despite this glum forecast for many swaths of suburbia, we should not lose sight of the bigger picture—the shift that's under way toward walkable urban living is a healthy development. In the most literal sense, it may lead to better personal health and a slimmer population. The environment, of course, will also benefit: if New York City were its own state, it would be the most energy-efficient state in the union; most Manhattanites not only walk or take public transit to get around, they unintentionally share heat with their upstairs neighbors.

Perhaps most important, the shift to walkable urban environments will give more people what they seem to want. I doubt the swing toward urban living will ever proceed as far as the swing toward the suburbs did in the 20th century; many people will still prefer the bigger houses and car-based lifestyles of conventional suburbs. But there will almost certainly be more of a balance between walkable and drivable communities—allowing people in most areas a wider variety of choices.

By the estimate of Virginia Tech's Arthur Nelson, as much as half of all real-estate development on the ground in 2025 will not have existed in 2000. It's exciting to imagine what the country will look like then. Building and residential migration seem to progress slowly from year to year, yet then one day, in retrospect, the landscape seems to have been transformed in the blink of an eye. Unfortunately, the next transformation, like the ones before it, will leave some places diminished. About 25 years ago, *Escape From New York* perfectly captured the zeitgeist of its moment. Two or three decades from now, the next Kurt Russell may find his breakout role in *Escape From the Suburban Fringe*. ▀

Christopher B. Leinberger is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, a professor of urban planning at the University of Michigan, and a real-estate developer. His most recent book, *The Option of Urbanism*, was published by Island Press in November.

The case for settling for Mr. Good Enough

BY LORI GOTTLIEB

Illustration by Lou Brooks

Marry Him

About six months after my son was born, he and I were sitting on a blanket at the park with a close friend and her daughter. It was a sunny summer weekend, and other parents and their kids picnicked nearby—mothers munching berries and lounging on the grass, fathers tossing balls with their giddy toddlers. My friend and I, who, in fits of self-empowerment, had conceived our babies with donor sperm because we hadn't met Mr. Right yet, surveyed the idyllic scene. ¶ "Ah, this is the dream," I said, and we nodded in silence for a minute, then burst out laughing. In some ways, I meant it: we'd both dreamed of motherhood, and here we were, picnicking in the park with our children. But it was also decidedly *not* the dream. The dream, like that of our mothers and their mothers from time immemorial, was to fall in love, get married, and live happily ever after. Of course, we'd be loath to admit it in this day and age, but ask »

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SO, YOU'RE **NOT** MR. PERFECT,
BRAD... BUT **MARRIAGE** MEANS
MORE TO ME THAN LOVE
EVER COULD!



any soul-baring 40-year-old single heterosexual woman what she most longs for in life, and she probably won't tell you it's a better career or a smaller waistline or a bigger apartment. Most likely, she'll say that what she really wants is a husband (and, by extension, a child).

To the outside world, of course, we still call ourselves feminists and insist—vehemently, even—that we're independent and self-sufficient and don't believe in any of that damsel-in-distress stuff, but in reality, we aren't fish who can do without a bicycle, we're women who want a traditional family. And despite growing up in an era when the centuries-old mantra to get married young was finally (and, it seemed, refreshingly) replaced by encouragement to postpone that milestone in pursuit of high ideals (education! career! but also true love!), every woman I know—no matter how successful and ambitious, how financially and emotionally secure—feels panic, occasionally coupled with desperation, if she hits 30 and finds herself unmarried.

Oh, I know—I'm guessing there are single 30-year-old women reading this right now who will be writing letters to the editor to say that the women I know aren't widely representative, that I've been co-opted by the cult of the feminist backlash, and basically, that I have no idea what

Because if you want to have the infrastructure in place to have a family, settling is the way to go. Based on my observations, in fact, settling will probably make you happier in the long run, since many of those who marry with great expectations become more disillusioned with each passing year. (It's hard to maintain that level of *zing* when the conversation morphs into discussions about who's changing the diapers or balancing the checkbook.)

Obviously, I wasn't always an advocate of settling. In fact, it took not settling to make me realize that settling is the better option, and even though settling is a rampant phenomenon, talking about it in a positive light makes people profoundly uncomfortable. Whenever I make the case for settling, people look at me with creased brows of disapproval or frowns of disappointment, the way a child might look at an older sibling who just informed her that Jerry's Kids aren't going to walk, even if you send them money. It's not only politically incorrect to get behind settling, it's downright un-American. Our culture tells us to keep our eyes on the prize (while our mothers, who know better, tell us not to be so picky), and the theme of holding out for true love (whatever *that* is—look at the divorce rate) permeates our collective mentality.

If you're a single 30-year-old woman and you say
you're not panicked about your marriage prospects,
then either you're in denial or you're lying.

I'm talking about. And all I can say is, if you say you're not worried, either you're in denial or you're lying. In fact, take a good look in the mirror and try to convince yourself that you're not worried, because you'll see how silly your face looks when you're being disingenuous.

Whether you acknowledge it or not, there's good reason to worry. By the time 35th-birthday-brunch celebrations roll around for still-single women, serious, irreversible life issues masquerading as "jokes" creep into public conversation: *Well, I don't feel old, but my eggs sure do!* or *Maybe this year I'll marry Todd. I'm not getting any younger!* The birthday girl smiles a bit too widely as she delivers these lines, and everyone laughs a little too hard for a little too long, not because we find these sentiments funny, but because we're awkwardly acknowledging how unfunny they are. At their core, they pose one of the most complicated, painful, and pervasive dilemmas many single women are forced to grapple with nowadays: Is it better to be alone, or to settle?

My advice is this: Settle! That's right. Don't worry about passion or intense connection. Don't nix a guy based on his annoying habit of yelling "Bravo!" in movie theaters. Overlook his halitosis or abysmal sense of aesthetics.

Even situation comedies, starting in the 1970s with *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and going all the way to *Friends*, feature endearing single women in the dating trenches, and there's supposed to be something romantic and even heroic about their search for true love. Of course, the crucial difference is that, whereas the earlier series begins after Mary has been jilted by her fiancé, the more modern-day *Friends* opens as Rachel Green leaves her nice-guy orthodontist fiancé at the altar simply because she isn't feeling it. But either way, in episode after episode, as both women continue to be unlucky in love, settling starts to look pretty darn appealing. Mary is supposed to be contentedly independent and fulfilled by her newsroom family, but in fact her life seems lonely. Are we to assume that at the end of the series, Mary, by then in her late 30s, found her soul mate after the lights in the newsroom went out and her work family was disbanded? If her experience was anything like mine or that of my single friends, it's unlikely.

And while Rachel and her supposed soul mate, Ross, finally get together (for the umpteenth time) in the finale of *Friends*, do we feel confident that she'll be happier with Ross than she would have been had she settled down

with Barry, the orthodontist, 10 years earlier? She and Ross have passion but have never had long-term stability, and the fireworks she experiences with him but not with Barry might actually turn out to be a liability, given how many times their relationship has already gone up in flames. It's equally questionable whether *Sex and the City's* Carrie Bradshaw, who cheated on her kindhearted and generous boyfriend, Aidan, only to end up with the more exciting but self-absorbed Mr. Big, will be better off in the framework of marriage and family. (Some time after the breakup, when Carrie ran into Aidan on the street, he was carrying his infant in a Baby Björn. Can anyone imagine Mr. Big walking around with a Björn?)

When we're holding out for deep romantic love, we have the fantasy that this level of passionate intensity will make us happier. But marrying Mr. Good Enough might be an equally viable option, especially if you're looking for a stable, reliable life companion. Madame Bovary might not see it that way, but if she'd remained single, I'll bet she would have been even more depressed than she was while living with her tedious but caring husband.

What I didn't realize when I decided, in my 30s, to break up with boyfriends I might otherwise have ended up marrying, is that while settling seems like an enormous act of resignation when you're looking at it from the vantage point of a single person, once you take the plunge and do it, you'll probably be relatively content. It sounds obvious now, but I didn't fully appreciate back then that what makes for a good marriage isn't necessarily what makes for a good romantic relationship. Once you're married, it's not about whom you want to go on vacation with; it's about whom you want to run a household with. Marriage isn't a passion-fest; it's more like a partnership formed to run a very small, mundane, and often boring nonprofit business. And I mean this in a good way.

I don't mean to say that settling is ideal. I'm simply saying that it might have gotten an undeservedly bad rap. As the only single woman in my son's mommy-and-me group, I used to listen each week to a litany of unrelenting complaints about people's husbands and feel pretty good about my decision to hold out for the right guy, only to realize that these women wouldn't trade places with me for a second, no matter how dull their marriages might be or how desperately they might long for a different husband. They, like me, would rather feel alone in a marriage than actually be alone, because they, like me, realize that marriage ultimately isn't about cosmic connection—it's about how having a teammate, even if he's not the love of your life, is better than not having one at all.

The couples my friend and I saw at the park that summer were enviable but not because they seemed so in love—they were enviable because the husbands played with the kids for 20 minutes so their wives could eat lunch. In practice, my married friends with kids don't spend that

much time with their husbands anyway (between work and child care), and in many cases, their biggest complaint seems to be that they never see each other. So if you rarely see your husband—but he's a decent guy who takes out the trash and sets up the baby gear, and he provides a second income that allows you to spend time with your child instead of working 60 hours a week to support a family on your own—how much does it matter whether the guy you marry is The One?

It's not that I've become jaded to the point that I don't believe in, or even crave, romantic connection. It's that my understanding of it has changed. In my formative years, romance was John Cusack and Ione Skye in *Say Anything*. But when I think about marriage nowadays, my role models are the television characters Will and Grace, who, though Will was gay and his relationship with Grace was platonic, were one of the most romantic couples I can think of. What I long for in a marriage is that sense of having a partner in crime. Someone who knows your day-to-day trivia. Someone who both calls you on your bullshit and puts up with your quirks. So what if Will and Grace weren't having sex with each other? How many long-married couples are having much sex anyway?

"I just want someone who's willing to be in the trenches with me," my single friend Jennifer told me, "and I never thought of marriage that way before." Two of Jennifer's friends married men who Jennifer believes aren't even straight, and while Jennifer wouldn't have made that choice a few years back, she wonders whether she might be capable of it in the future. "Maybe they understood something that I didn't," she said.

What they understood is this: as your priorities change from romance to family, the so-called "deal breakers" change. Some guys aren't worldly, but they'd make great dads. Or you walk into a room and start talking to this person who is 5'4" and has an unfortunate nose, but he "gets" you. My long-married friend Renée offered this dating advice to me in an e-mail:

I would say even if he's not the love of your life, make sure he's someone you respect intellectually, makes you laugh, appreciates you ... I bet there are plenty of these men in the older, overweight, and bald category (which they all eventually become anyway).

She wasn't joking.

A number of my single women friends admit (in hushed voices and after I swear I won't use their real names here) that they'd readily settle now but wouldn't have 10 years ago. They believe that part of the problem is that we grew up idealizing marriage—and that if we'd had a more realistic understanding of its cold, hard benefits, we might have done things differently. Instead, we grew up thinking that

marriage meant feeling some kind of divine spark, and so we walked away from uninspiring relationships that might have made us happy in the context of a family.

All marriages, of course, involve compromise, but where's the cutoff? Where's the line between compromising and settling, and at what age does that line seem to fade away? Choosing to spend your life with a guy who doesn't delight in the small things in life might be considered settling at 30, but not at 35. By 40, if you get a cold shiver down your spine at the thought of embracing a certain guy, but you enjoy his company more than anyone else's, is that settling or making an adult compromise?

Take the date I went on last night. The guy was substantially older. He had a long history of major depression and said, in reference to the movies he was writing, "I'm fascinated by comas" and "I have a strong interest in terrorists." He'd never been married. He was rude to the waiter. But he very much wanted a family, and he was successful, handsome, and smart. As I looked at him from across the

table, I thought, *Yeah, I'll see him again. Maybe I can settle for that.* But my very next thought was, *Maybe I can settle for better.* It's like musical chairs—when do you take a seat, any seat, just so you're not left standing alone?

Back when I was still convinced I'd find my soul mate, I did, although I never articulated this, have certain requirements. I thought that the person I married would have to have a sense of wonderment about the world, would be both spontaneous and grounded, and would acknowledge that life is hard but also be able to navigate its ups and downs with humor. Many of the guys I dated possessed these qualities, but if one of them lacked a certain degree of kindness, another didn't seem emotionally stable enough, and another's values clashed with mine. Others were sweet but so boring that I preferred reading during dinner to sitting through another tedious conversation. I also dated someone who appeared to be highly compatible with me—we had much in common,

CONSTITUTIONAL

(O.G., 1872–1962)

It's a wonder they didn't all of them die of the
sun those days. Remember
Ole's forehead and the backs of his hands?
The fair-haired sons of Norway in their bright
Wisconsin fields, the map

of blessed second chances writ in tasseled
corn. (The damage writ
in melanin.) I never could stand it, my father
would say, by which he meant the morning
constitutional: the dose

of electric fencing Ole found was just the
cure for frozen joints.
But joints be damned, the rest of it my father
loved, he'd cast about for a portion I
could manage, maybe

Linda could fetch the cows. Poor man. He little
thought how quickly
the race declines. *Ourselves and our posterity.*
It all alarmed me: dung slicks, culvert, swollen
teats, the single narrow

wire above the barbed ones, commotion
of flies on the rim
of the pail. We're better at living on paper,
some of us, better at blessings already
secured. The fence?

It was for animals. And insulated, quaintly,
with a species of porcelain
knob. That part, at least, I had the wit
to find benign, like the basket of straw-flecked
eggs. A touch of homely

caution in the liable-to-turn-on-us world.

Ordain and establish.

And breakable too. An old man at his battery-
charged devotions, double-fisted on
the six-volt fence. *In order*

to form. A measure of guesswork, a measure
of faithful refraining-from-
harm, let us honor the virtues of form.
And all the dead in company, if only
not to shame them.

—LINDA GREGERSON

Linda Gregerson's most recent collection of poems is *Magnetic North*, a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award. She teaches at the University of Michigan.

and strong physical chemistry—but while our sensibilities were similar, they proved to be a half-note off, so we never quite felt in harmony, or never viewed the world through quite the same lens.

Now, though, I realize that if I don't want to be alone for the rest of my life, I'm at the age where I'll likely need to settle for someone who is settling for me. What I and many women who hold out for true love forget is that we won't always have the same appeal that we may have had in our 20s and early 30s. Having turned 40, I now have wrinkles, bags under my eyes, and hair in places I didn't know hair could grow on women. With my nonworking life consumed by thoughts of potty training and playdates, I've become a far less interesting person than the one who went on hiking adventures and performed at comedy clubs. But when I chose to have a baby on my own, the plan was that I would continue to search for true connection afterward; it certainly wasn't that I would have a baby alone only to settle later. After all, wouldn't it have been wiser to settle for a higher caliber of "not Mr. Right" while my marital value was at its peak?

Those of us who choose not to settle in hopes of finding a soul mate later are almost like teenagers who believe they're invulnerable to dying in a drunk-driving accident. We lose sight of our mortality. We forget that we, too, will age and become less alluring. And even if some men do find us engaging, and they're ready to have a family, they'll likely decide to marry someone younger with whom they can have their own biological children. Which is all the more reason to settle before settling is no longer an option.

I'll be the first to admit that there's something objectionable about making the case for settling, because it's based on the premise that women's biological clocks place them at the mercy of men, and that therefore a power dynamic dictates what should be an affair solely of the heart (not the heart *and* the ovaries). But I'm not the only woman who accepts settling as a valid choice—apparently so do the millions who buy bestselling relationship books that advocate settling but that, so as not to offend, simply spin the concept as a form of female empowerment.

Take, for instance, books like *Men Are Like Fish: What Every Woman Needs to Know About Catching a Man* or *Find a Husband After 35 Using What I Learned at Harvard Business School*, whose titles alone make it clear that today's supposedly progressive bachelorettes aren't waiting for old-fashioned true love to strike before they can get married. Instead, they're buying dozens of proactive coaching manuals to learn how to strategically land a man. The actual man in question, though, seems so irrelevant that, to my mind, these women might as well grab a well-dressed guy off the street, drag him into the nearest bar, buy him a drink, and ask him to marry her. (Or, to retain her "power," she should manipulate *him* into asking *her*.)

The approaches in these books may differ, but the message is the same: more important than love is marriage. To achieve that goal, women across the country are poring over guidebooks that all boil down to determining, "Does he like me?," while completely overlooking the equally essential question, "Do I like him?" In other words, whatever compromises you have to make—including, but not limited to, pretending to be or actually becoming an entirely different person—make sure that you get some schmo to propose to you before you turn into a spinster.

Last year's *Why Smart Men Marry Smart Women* makes the most blatant case for settling: if women were more willing to "think outside the box," as one of the book's married sources advises, many of them would be married. The author then trots out tales of professional, accomplished women happily dating a plumber, a park ranger, and an Army helicopter nurse. The moral is supposed to be "Don't be too picky" but many of the anecdotes quote women who seem to be trying to convince not just the reader, but themselves, that they haven't settled.

"I should be with some guy with a vast vocabulary who is very smart," said Heather, a 30-year-old lawyer turned journalist. Instead, she's dating an actor who didn't finish college. "My boyfriend is fun, he's smart, but he hasn't gone through years of school. He wanted to pursue acting. And you can tell—he doesn't have that background, and it never ever once bothered me. But for everyone else, [his lack of education] is what they see." Another woman says she dates "the 'secrets' ... guys other women don't recognize as great." How's that for damning praise?

Meanwhile, in sugarcoating this message, the authors often resort to flattery, telling the reader to remember how fabulous, attractive, charming, and intelligent she is, in the hopes that she'll project a more confident vibe on dates. In my case, though, the flattery backfired. I read these books thinking, *Wait, if I'm such a great catch, why should I settle for anyone less than my equal? If I'm so fabulous, don't I deserve true romantic connection?*

Only one popular book that I can think of in the vast "find a man" genre (like most single women confounded by their singleness, I'm embarrassingly well versed) takes the opposite approach. In *He's Just Not That Into You*, written by the happily married Greg Behrendt and the unhappily single Liz Tuccillo, the duo exhorts women not to settle. But the book's format is telling: Behrendt gives perky pep talks to women unable to find a worthy match, while Tuccillo repeatedly comments on how hard it is to take her co-author's advice, because while being with a partner who is "beneath you" (Behrendt's term) is problematic, being single just plain "sucks" (Tuccillo's term).

Before I got pregnant, though, I also read single-mom books such as *Choosing Single Motherhood: The Thinking Woman's Guide*, whose chapter titles "Can I Afford It?" and "Dealing With the Stress" seemed like realistic antidotes

to the faux-empowering man-hunting manual headings like "A Little Lingerie Can Go a Long Way." But the book's author, Mikki Morrissette, held out a tantalizing carrot. In her introduction, she describes having a daughter on her own; then, she writes, a few years later and five months pregnant with her son, "I met a guy I fell in love with. He and my daughter were in the delivery room when my son was born in January 2004." Each time I read about single women having babies on their own and thriving instead of settling for Mr. Wrong and hiring a divorce lawyer, I felt all jazzed and ready to go. At the time, I truly believed, "I can have it all—a baby now, my soul mate later!"

Well ... ha! Hahahaha. And ha.

Just as the relationship books fail to mention what happens after you triumphantly land a husband (you actually have to live with each other), these single-mom books fail to mention that once you have a baby alone, not only do you age about 10 years in the first 10 months, but if you don't have time to shower, eat, urinate in a timely manner, or even leave the house except for work, where you spend every waking moment that your child is at day care, there's very little chance that a man—much less The One—is going to knock on your door and join *that* party.

They also gloss over the cost of dating as a single mom: the time and money spent on online dating (because there are no single men at toddler birthday parties); the babysitter tab for all those boring blind dates; and, most frustrating, hours spent away from your beloved child. Even women who settle but end up divorced might be in a better position than those of us who became mothers on our own, because many ex-wives get both child-support payments and a free night off when the kids go to Dad's house for a sleepover. Never-married moms don't get the night off. At the end of the evening, we rush home to pay the babysitter, make any houseguest tiptoe around and speak in a hushed voice, then wake up at 6 a.m. at the first cries of "Mommy!"

Try bringing a guy home to that.

Settling is mostly a women's game. Men settle far less often and, when they do, they don't seem the least bit bothered by the fact that they're settling.

My friend Alan, for instance, justified his choice of a "bland" wife who's a good mom but with whom he shares little connection this way: "I think one-stop shopping is overrated. I get passion at my office with my work, or with my friends that I sometimes call or chat with—it's not the same, and, boy, it would be exciting to have it with my spouse. But I spend more time with people at my office than I do with my spouse."

Then there's my friend Chris, a single 35-year-old marketing consultant who for three years dated someone he calls "the perfect woman"—a kind and beautiful surgeon. She broke off the relationship several times because, she told him with regret, she didn't think she wanted to spend

her life with him. Each time, Chris would persuade her to reconsider, until finally she called it off for good, saying that she just couldn't marry somebody she wasn't in love with. Chris was devastated, but now that his ex-girlfriend has reached 35, he's suddenly hopeful about their future.

"By the time she turns 37," Chris said confidently, "she'll come back. And I'll bet she'll marry me then. I know she wants to have kids." I asked Chris why he would want to be with a woman who wasn't in love with him. Wouldn't he be settling, too, by marrying someone who would be using him to have a family? Chris didn't see it that way at all. "*She'll* be settling," Chris said cheerfully. "But not me. I get to marry the woman of my dreams. That's not settling. That's the fantasy."

Chris believes that women are far too picky: everyone knows, he says, that a single middle-aged man still has appealing prospects; a single middle-aged woman likely doesn't. And he's right. Single women are painfully aware of this. I hear far more women than men talk about getting married as a goal to be met by a certain deadline. My friend Gabe points out that this allows men to be the true romantics; when a man breaks up with a perfectly acceptable woman because he's "just not feeling it," there's none of the ambivalence a woman with a deadline feels. "Women are the least romantic," Gabe said. "They think, 'I can do that.' For a lot of women, it becomes less about love and more about what they can live with."

Not long ago, Gabe, who is 43, dated a woman he liked very much one-on-one, but he broke up with her because "she couldn't be *haimish*"—comfortable—with his friends in a group setting. He has no regrets. A female friend who broke up with a guy because he "didn't like to read" and who is now, too, a single mom (with, ironically, no time to read herself) similarly felt no regrets—at first. At the time, she couldn't imagine settling, but here's the Catch-22: "If I'd settled at 39," she said, "I always would have had the fantasy that something better exists out there. Now I know better. Either way, I was screwed."

The paradox, of course, is that the more it behooves a woman to settle, the less willing she is to settle; a woman in her mid- to late 30s is more discriminating than one in her 20s. She has friends who have known her since childhood, friends who will know her more intimately and understand her more viscerally than any man she meets in midlife. Her tastes and sense of self are more solidly formed. She says things like "He wants me to move downtown, but I love my home at the beach," and "But he's just not *curious*," and "Can I really spend my life with someone who's allergic to dogs?"

I've been told that the reason so many women end up alone is that we have too many choices. I think it's the opposite: we have no choice. If we could choose, we'd choose to be in a healthy marriage based on reciprocal

passion and friendship. But the only choices on the table, it sometimes seems, are settle or risk being alone forever. That's not a whole lot of choice.

Remember the movie *Broadcast News*? Holly Hunter's dilemma—the choice between passion and friendship—is exactly the one many women over 30 are faced with. In the end, Holly Hunter's character decides to wait for the right guy, but he (of course) never materializes. Meanwhile, her emotional soul mate, the Albert Brooks character, gets married (of course) and has children.

And no matter what women decide—settle or don't settle—there's a price to be paid, because there's always going to be regret. Unless you meet the man of your dreams (who, by the way, doesn't exist, precisely because *you dreamed him up*), there's going to be a downside to getting married, but a possibly more profound downside to holding out for someone better.

My friend Jennifer summed it up this way: "When I used to hear women complaining bitterly about their husbands, I'd think, 'How sad, they settled.' Now it's like, 'God, that would be nice.'"

degrees of desperation over the past few years: a recovering alcoholic who doesn't always go to his meetings; a trying-to-make-it-in-his-40s actor; a widower who has three nightmarish kids and who's still actively grieving for his dead wife; and a socially awkward engineer (so socially awkward that he declined to attend his wife's book party). It's not that these women are crazy; it's that the dating pool has dwindled dramatically and that, due to gender politics, the few available men tend to require far more of a concession than those who were single when we were younger. And while I have a much higher tolerance for settling than I did back then, now I have my son to consider. It's one thing to settle for a subpar mate; it's quite another to settle for a subpar father figure for my child. So while there's more incentive to settle now, there's less willingness to settle too much, because that would be a disservice to my son.

This doesn't undermine my case for settling. Instead, it supports my argument to do it young, when settling involves constructing a family environment with a perfectly acceptable man who may not trip your romantic trigger—as opposed to doing it older, when settling involves selling

If you rarely see your husband—but he's a decent guy who takes out the trash, sets up the baby gear, and provides a second income—how much does it matter whether he's The One?

That's why mothers tell their daughters to "keep an open mind" about the guy who spends his weekends playing Internet poker or touches your back for two minutes while watching ESPN and calls that "a massage." The more-pertinent questions, to most concerned mothers of daughters in their 30s, have to do with whether the daughter's boyfriend will make a good father; or, if he's a workaholic, whether he can provide the environment for her to be a good mother. As my own mother once advised me, when I was dating a musician, "Everyone settles to some degree. You might as well settle pragmatically."

I know all this now, and yet—here's the problem—much as I'd like to settle, I can't seem to do it. It's not that I have to be dazzled by a guy anymore (though it would be nice). It's not even that I have to think about him when he's not around (though that would be nice, too). Nor is it that I'm unable to accept reality and make significant compromises because that's what grown-ups do (I can and have—I had a baby on my own).

No, the problem is that the very nature of dating leaves women my age to wrestle with a completely different level of settling. It's no longer a matter, as it was in my early 30s, of "just not feeling it," of wanting to be in love. Consider the men whom older women I know have married in varying

your very soul in exchange for damaged goods. Admittedly, it's a dicey case to make because, like the divorced women I know who claim they wouldn't have done anything differently, because then they wouldn't have Biff and Buffy, I, too, can't imagine life without my magical son. (Although, had I had children with a Mr. Good Enough, wouldn't I be as hopelessly in love with those children, too?) I also acknowledge the power of the grass-is-always-greener phenomenon, and allow for the possibility that my life alone is better (if far more difficult) than the life I would have in a comfortable but tepid marriage.

But then my married friends say things like, "Oh, you're so lucky, you don't have to negotiate with your husband about the cost of piano lessons" or "You're so lucky, you don't have anyone putting the kid in front of the TV and you can raise your son the way you want." I'll even hear things like, "You're so lucky, you don't have to have sex with someone you don't want to."

The lists go on, and each time, I say, "OK, if you're so unhappy, and if I'm so lucky, leave your husband! In fact, send him over here!"

Not one person has taken me up on this offer. ▀

Lori Gottlieb, the author of *Stick Figure: A Diary of My Former Self* (2001) and co-author of *I Love You, Nice to Meet You* (2006), is a regular commentator for National Public Radio.



The Critics

TRAVELS

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THE SOUND OF SILENCE

The main plaza of the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo of the Escorial, a 16th-century retreat outside Madrid. Francis X. Rocca revisits Spain's rich monastic tradition in "The Caudillo's Cloister"

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIGUEL ANGEL DIAZ REY

THE ATLANTIC | MARCH 2008

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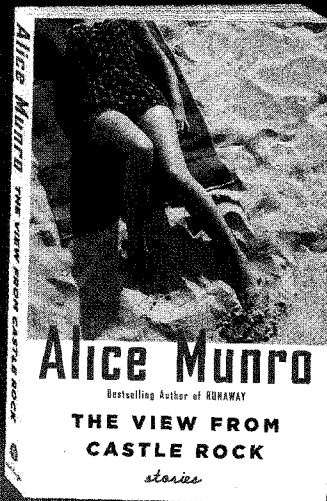
VIEW IN PAPERBACK

A NEW YORK TIMES
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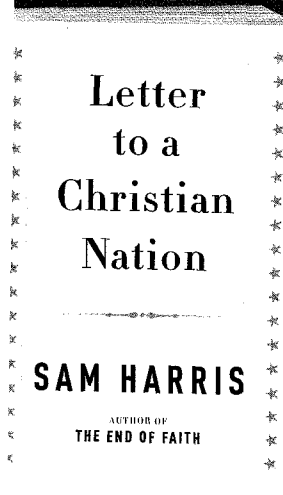
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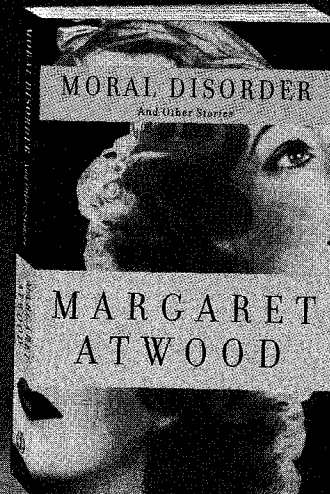


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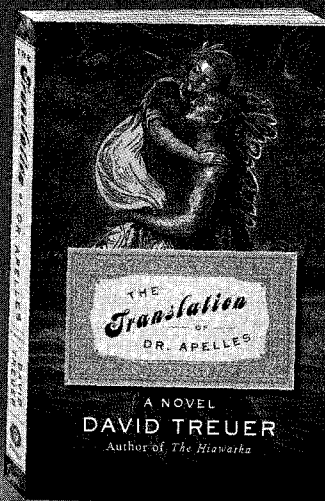
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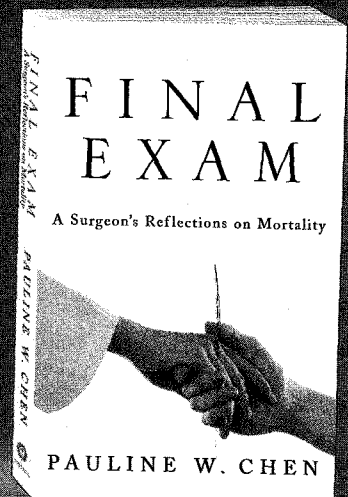
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—The New York Times



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BOOKS

Editor's Choice: When postwar modernism went west, it dropped the angst—and transformed a culture.

California Cool

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, a small group of painters in Southern California made the region an internationally prominent modern-art center and defined an “L.A. Look” recognizable to this day; Los Angeles’s architects produced the most influential and winning collection of modernist houses ever built; its designers created America’s most seminal and enduring modern furniture designs; and its musicians mounted the only significant challenge to New York’s jazz supremacy in the past 60 years. A number of penetrating books—Peter Plagens’s *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast, 1945-1970*; Reyner Banham’s *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*; Pat Kirkham’s *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*; Elizabeth Smith’s *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses*; and Ted Gioia’s *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960*—have probed discrete aspects of this remarkable cultural flowering. But the first to connect the various artistic forms that modernism took in the region is the unusually intelligent and lavishly illustrated *Birth of the Cool*, by Elizabeth Armstrong, with essays by six prominent art critics (the eponymous art exhibition is currently touring the country). More important, the book provocatively suggests that a common sensibility animated all those forms. It thereby illuminates the substance of style—that is, how an aesthetic both shapes and is shaped by viewpoint and temperament, proclivities and prejudices.

Nearly every aspect of this sudden efflorescence can be traced to long-developing regional trends and affections, or was at the least firmly anchored



THE ESSENCE OF COOL: Julius Shulman imbued his architectural photographs with an offhanded eroticism.

in Southern California’s eccentric economic, social, climatological, and even technological environment. For instance, Southern California produced little noteworthy modern art before the austere, crisply defined “Hard-Edge” geometric

paintings, with their uninflected colors, that Lorser Feitelson, John McLaughlin, Frederick Hammersley, Karl Benjamin, Helen Lundeborg, and June Harwood created beginning in the early 1950s. And when it did, those works were uniquely

tied to Southern California conditions. The paintings were in part inspired by the pure, clean lines of Los Angeles's Case Study houses and the city's other modernist dwellings. (Appropriately enough, *Birth of the Cool* devotes one full essay and a significant part of another to these houses, and their images are reproduced throughout the book.) The region's strong, clear light, which at once sharpens and idealizes forms and creates uncannily crisp shadows, was undoubtedly the essential factor in the development of the Hard-Edge style (though, surprisingly, *Birth of the Cool* fails to note it).

Similarly, the elegant yet sprightly, pavilion-like glass-and-steel Case Study houses, designed for Los Angeles's swelling postwar professional middle class, could only be realized with new techniques and materials, many of which had emerged from the region's war industries. As Elizabeth Smith notes in an essay in this book, "technologically oriented" Southern California proved unusually receptive to residential applications of those innovative industrial methods and materials, which were easily available in the region. Furthermore (as I've pointed out in these pages), the houses' interweaving of outdoor and indoor space and their breezy informality put them in the tradition of a uniquely Californian way of living and domestic architecture going back to Schindler and Neutra's modernist L.A. houses of the 1920s-'40s and, earlier, the stripped-down Craftsman bungalows of the 1910s and '20s.

And, for that matter, the low-key, untroubled fluency of the California cool jazz of Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Buddy Collette, Shelly Manne, Bill Holman, and Bud Shank clearly grew out of West Coast musicians' peculiar historical affinity for the easy swing of the Count Basie Orchestra.

The music's even-tempered, insouciant approach owed a lot to the sunny city in which the musicians found themselves, just as the relatively easy life that 1950s Los Angeles offered to musicians, composers, and arrangers (the steady work from movie and recording studios obviated incessant touring) gave rise to the music's characteristically polished, heavily arranged, cerebral quality.



LEADING-EDGE Industrial materials inspired the designs of Charles and Ray Eames.

Moreover, even if the innovative designs of the high-minded and enormously successful Venice, California-based husband-and-wife partnership of Charles and Ray Eames, whose hugely influential work figures in nearly every essay in this book, might seem to lie outside a Los Angeles context and tradition (the region had never before had designers of mass-produced, avant-garde furniture), the couple's creations in fact depended on new lightweight materials and inventive ways of fusing them—materials that would have been impossible to develop outside of Southern California, home of leading-edge

military and aeronautical industries. It was to fashion leg splints for the U.S. Navy during World War II that the Eameses had initially developed the plywood-molding system that allowed for the production of their DCM chair—a piece of furniture the British architectural historian Reyner Banham has declared no less than "the most compelling artefact of its generation." The couple invested the astringencies of modernism with the whimsy, playfulness, and love of juxtaposition that had long been attributes of the Southern California good life—see, for instance, their Case Study house, with its child's-play panels of bright color and its marriage of warmly natural and austere industrial materials—reflecting what Armstrong in her essay nicely characterizes as the region's "ideal of informal domesticity."

Birth of the Cool proposes that the connections and commonalities among California's mid-century modernist musicians, architects, and painters include a collective sensibility—"cool," an emphasis on restraint and detachment—that was rooted in but hardly confined to aesthetics. Nearly every aspect of California modernism developed in rebellion—not against the usual anti-modernism but against other manifestations of modernism, East Coast or European, that emphasized the heroic and the emotionally expressive. Hard-Edge painting (originally dubbed "Abstract Classicism") elevated calculation, a Zen-influenced harmony, and formal austerity (qualities that didn't exclude, especially in Lundberg's work, the lyrical) explicitly in opposition to the overheated romanticism and gestural and emotional fervency of Abstract Expressionism, specifically Pollock's action painting. The work of the Hard-Edge painters, their first collective exhibition catalog in 1959 asserted, "runs

counter to a widespread contemporary belief in the primary value of emotion and intuition in esthetic experience ... the [Hard-Edge painter] is not preoccupied with art as an opportunity to make autobiographical statements. He is not a narcissist in paint, nor does he turn to art for the succor of the confessional."

In the same vein, even as the Case Study architects purified the International Style, they also feminized and down-scaled it (seldom have great architects lavished such attention nearly exclusively on the small single-family house) with their jaunty touch, and eschewed what Banham called "that heroic-style creative angst of the European-based modern movement." This permitted a quality incompatible with passion, artistic and otherwise: wit. Along with their photographer of choice, Julius Shulman—whose photographs capture "the essence of 'cool,'" Smith says, and who was one of the very rare photographers who put people in architectural shots—the Case Study architects imbued the married partners at the heart of domesticity with an arch, slightly quizzical, offhandedly erotic underplay that modulated and refined family life and bourgeois sexuality. (With its severe geometries and saturated colors, Shulman's photo of Pierre Koenig and a model in his Case Study House #21 seems plainly influenced by Hard-Edge painting.) Finally, in both its architects' and designers' focus on the domestic—that is, the private and the sheltered—California modernism fostered a detachment, even a quietism, that in itself militated against zeal and emotional heedlessness.

Similarly, what the critic Whitney Balliet called the "pervasive suavity" of West Coast jazz—an understated and cleanly articulated playing that stayed close to the melody, tempered improvisation with control, and shunned blatant virtuosity—developed in response to the raw expression, the ostentatious and ath-

letic displays (along with squawks and jagged accents) that characterized the increasing excesses of bop and hard bop, the dominant jazz styles back east. Cool jazz, especially its vocalists, injected the

music with nonchalance and a sense of irony—qualities wholly absent from the jazz mainstream. The L.A.-based singers June Christy (the well-scrubbed former canary of the Stan Kenton Orchestra, the only great Los Angeles big band), Peggy Lee (onstage, she didn't

emote; she arched an eyebrow), and Frank Sinatra (especially on his up-tempo numbers, which convey the sense that romance is a lovely, transitory lark), all of whom recorded for Los Angeles's trend-setting Capitol Records, interpreted lyrics with a resigned intelligence and a refined detachment. Listen to Christy's signature "Something Cool," about a tawdry lounge pickup, told from the perspective of the self-deluded female barfly: such knowingness entirely eluded the fervent (and earnest) Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, and Nina Simone.

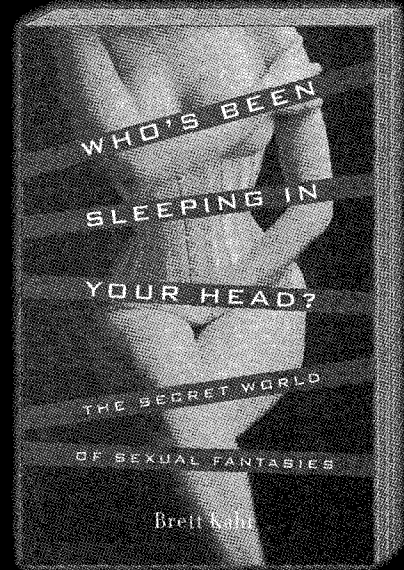
Birth of the Cool evokes a profoundly distant period in American popular culture, aesthetics, style, and sensibility—and not only because it assesses the artifacts of a time and place of singular ebullience and prosperity. Postwar cool yielded to the '60s, the most engaged, committed, and overwrought decade in our cultural history, a decade whose romantic excesses still haunt us. To be sure, a "cool" aesthetic could lapse easily into the commercially slick; witness the career of the West Coast jazzman Henry Mancini. But self-awareness, to say nothing of good manners and a sense of proportion, aesthetic and otherwise, demands a healthy measure of the cool. After all, as that consummate bard of cool Joan Didion once remarked, it's impossible to maintain "any kind of swoon, commiserative or carnal, in a cold shower." ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic's* literary editor and national editor.



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BOOKS

How a pushy, Type A mother stopped reading Jonathan Kozol and learned to love the public schools

Tales Out of School

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

I am a longtime, rabid fan of Jonathan Kozol. Yea, I could show you my tower of dog-eared Kozolalia: *The Shame of the Nation*, *Savage Inequalities*, *Prisoners of Silence*, *Illiterate America*. In my mind, Kozol's titles appear all in caps, like flaming Hebraic letters on the side of a monument. I am the sort of impressionable woman whose eyes seep tears while reading his heartrending descriptions of racial inequity in public education. Kozol doesn't just decry what he sees as the pre-civil-rights-South level of segregation that persists to this day, the percentage of African American children in integrated schools having fallen to its lowest level since the death of Martin Luther King. For four decades, he has made visceral this tragic loss of human potential. Through his somber, exquisitely detailed accounts, I've watched countless poor black children begin as charmingly inquisitive and hopeful 5-year-olds, and then, as years pass, as concentric circles of chain-link fence close in, to the beat of that grim government drum, I've seen their once-bright spirits dim, heard their once-mellifluous questions ebb to dull monosyllables. I have ridden this roller coaster so often that at one point I took my tower of Kozols to my therapist's office and despairingly set them on her glass coffee table, like a basket of orphaned kittens. Pfizer should develop a special antidepressant—"Zokol: for when you've read too much Kozol."

In his most recent book, *Letters to a Young Teacher*, structured as correspondence to a first-grade teacher he visits in an inner-city Boston classroom, Kozol combines his critical observations on today's schools with a memoir of his own experiences as a teacher. On the



EMILIANO PONZI

personal rewards of pedagogy and the private virtue of poor black urban families, he is a true believer. He urges young, idealistic white teachers—such as his pen pal—in poor black urban schools (Kozol's world is often cast strictly in black-and-white) to go to the homes of the seemingly apathetic black parents who eschew PTA meetings. There they may replicate the experience Kozol had during his first year of teaching in 1964, in which he was fed a home-cooked meal, treated like a brother, and introduced to the poetry of Langston Hughes.

Be assured, age has not mellowed Kozol. Such poor black parents have given up, not on their children, he thunders, but on an intractable system that has yielded generations of underfunded, substandard schooling. Neglected inner-city schools have long been filthy, prison-like, and dangerously decrepit—a signature Kozol classroom moment is when a rotting window frame falls, nearly raining glass on the black schoolchildren sitting below. Now, however, he contends that government attention has made these schools even worse. Via *No Child Left Behind* and other draconian schemes, the underprivileged are force-marched through a nonstop schedule of high-stakes testing so they will better conform to such soulless corporate values as “proficiency” and “productivity.”

Beating up on public schools is not just our nation's favorite blood sport, but also a favorite conversational entertainment of the well-off—like debating the most recent toothsome plot twists of *Big Love*—who, of course, have no dog in the fight. And who adore a tragic ending. In my Los Angeles, everyone agrees that public education is a bombed-out shell, nonnegotiable, impoverished, unaccountable, run in Spanish. I wept over Kozol's books for years, but I myself am no freedom fighter. If I could have afforded either a \$1.3 million house in La Cañada or \$40,000 a year to send my two girls to a private school (that is, if we'd gotten into said school; I confess that, even though I described my older

daughter as “marvelously inquisitive” when we applied, we were wait-listed) I wouldn't waste two minutes on social justice. Let them spell *cake*! (Which is to say, let them spell it “kake.”) We tried to flee to the white suburbs, but we failed, and in failing, we seem to have fallen out of the middle class, because today my daughters attend public school with the urban poor.

Yes, a First World family's initial entry into Los Angeles's 21st-century urban public schools can be daunting. Yes, one's uniquely American expectations of giving one's children a better life than one had growing up can be challenged. On simple demographics alone, the landscape startles.

Among educated, upwardly aspiring English-speaking families, my neighborhood of Van Nuys—with its 99-cent stores, *pupuserias*, and throngs of Hispanics waiting for Godot at MTA bus stops—is considered a no-man's-land. A study by Van Nuys High School suggests that about 80 percent of our residents are Hispanic, a substantial portion of whom are recent arrivals (although

many live in apartment buildings with glamorously scrawled—if faded—British royalty-inspired monikers like “Castle Arms” or “The Windsor!”). Our eldest daughter is the only blonde in her class of 20, her grade being about one-third English-learners.

But whither the “white” people? If you'd asked me five years ago what ethnic mix in a school would feel “comfortable” for our family (my husband being white, me being a Southern California native of German-Chinese extraction), I would have guessed, if not two-thirds white, or if not half, certainly at least a third—a third whitish English-speaking children, like mine. A third with freckles, striped shirts, and lunch boxes of tuna-fish sandwiches, the totems I myself grew up with in this region in the '60s. But, as I've since learned, in 21st-century Los Angeles, expecting such a relatively high percentage of pale children is

statistically unrealistic. Today, the Los Angeles Unified School District is overwhelmingly Hispanic (73 percent), the remaining quarter a roiling mishmash of black, yellow, perhaps a dab of red, and white. In fact, it is less than 9 percent white, and since the technical LAUSD definition is “non-Hispanic white,” that includes children of Middle Eastern and Armenian descent. In L.A. Unified, *white* may actually refer to a brown-skinned Syrian Muslim English-learner.

The extent to which feeling overwhelmed by brownness and foreignness frightens the few remaining freckled and tuna-fish-laden Caucasian children in the city away from the public schools is not acknowledged and certainly not discussed. Parents cite loftier goals than white flight (“Dylan's learning style requires a progressive educational philosophy based on Dewey/Piaget/Independent thinking!”). Of course, rare is the pricey Westside private (now called “independent”) school that doesn't list, as one of its top values, “honoring diversity” ... even if the diversity that is honored looks like 14 white children and the son of Denzel Washington. Of course, life within Johannesburg's ivy enclaves gnaws—well-meaning Westside friends confess their dismay at how little meaningful contact their spawn have with brown children. Theirs are world-traveling teens who have ridden the Paris Métro and the London Underground, but have never climbed onto a Los Angeles bus. The anxious solution typically involves private-school diversity committees that produce “diversity retreats” (retreats *from* diversity?), as in one case I heard about where a school's seniors went on a weekend trip to Santa Barbara to watch and discuss the movie *Crash*.

After a fair amount of heartache, I have to admit I have given up on trying to charm white people, at least a certain NPR-listening, Bobo, chattering class of white people, back into public school. For these shrinking families, the aesthetics alone of public schools are horrifying—the chain-link fence, putty-colored bungalows, fluorescent lighting. Confessed one writer dad to me, about

LETTERS TO
A YOUNG
TEACHER

by Jonathan
Kozol
Crown

his son's corner elementary (which he did not have the heart to step inside): "Even the grass made me sad." Another white mom rejected my daughters' school because our kindergarten wall art looked "rote." Asians, on the other hand, tend to overlook the occasional snarl of graffiti (in our city, a way of life). What they see at Van Nuys High, for instance, with penetrating laser vision, are the math and medical magnets embedded within. Indeed, I've gradually become aware—via frequent newsletters—that behind those high brown walls flourishes a buzzing hive of Korean Magnet Parents. They are busily committee-meeting, Teacher Appreciation-lunching, and catapulting their children from Van Nuys High School directly into Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Caltech, Berkeley! Why should they spend \$25,000 for each year of high school to make the Ivy League? These immigrants know how to find value!

Wild and woolly as it is, I felt this Brave New World would thrill longtime integrationist Jonathan Kozol: it's a melting pot on a scope so vast, no one in the '60s could have even dreamed of it. Having used my public-radio clout to arrange a colloquy with the man himself during one of his book tours, I fantasized, crazed superfan-style, about kidnapping him, whisking him off to observe my daughters' shabby but brave 56 percent free-and-reduced-price-lunch public school. He'd throw back his weary, bespectacled head in a sudden boyish yawp of merriment when he realized what I was up to. "I loathe these junkets, anyway!" he'd exclaim. "Those New York PR people, how they pester! Let's go SEE THE CHILDREN!" And then, soon enough, he would fall in love with our kids, our teachers, our principal, our artwork, our music, our lemon tree, our handicapped bunny, and of course, me.

But, as it turned out, there was no way I could ever have coaxed him into my beat-up Volvo. I had hoped, I suppose, for a dialogue. Here was a man passionate about public schools. And here was I, yes, merely a radio commentator useful for disseminating his message, but on the other hand, also the mother of young children who

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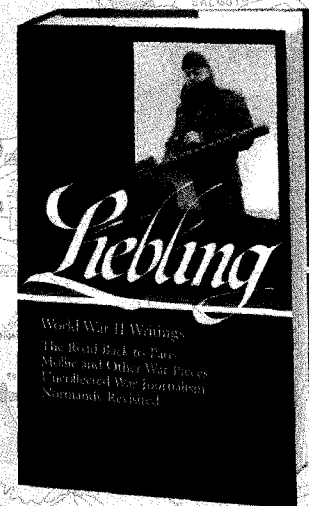
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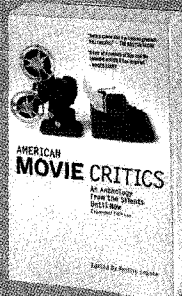
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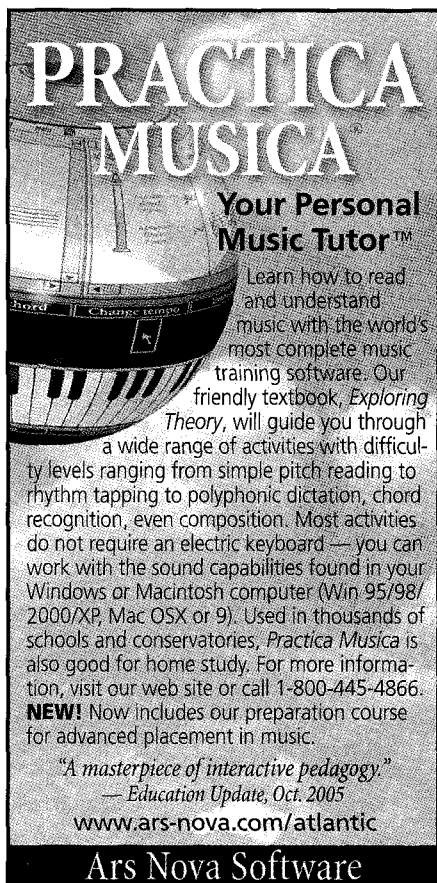
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were at that very moment wielding crayons in those poor urban classrooms for which he fights. I was on the front lines! I had tales! I had information!

But the dialogue door, it seemed, had somehow closed. As I remember it, via my admittedly middle-aged hormonal memory, Kozol would not be diverted from his plan: to help segregated school-children, at every stop in his tour, at all the colleges, he was going to gather hundreds of e-mail addresses, which would then be organized into a rising, unstoppable political movement of teachers, students, and social activists who would storm the White House and demand Bush halt Savage Inequalities in government funding for poor children, NOW!

"At my kids' school," I put in at one point, "what WE are doing is—" He barreled on with his civil-rights monologue, paying me no heed. "Mr. Kozol!" I tried again, a trifle more loudly, "At my daughters' TITLE I LOS ANGELES SCHOOL, THE GOOD NEWS IS—" But he wasn't interested. What we need are moral leaders! he roared mightily. This is a civil-rights issue! We need a religious leader, a prophet ... thundering from the pulpit! I felt as though I'd stepped into a prehistoric jungle. I could practically hear the flap of pterodactyls overhead. I couldn't even picture what moral authority would look like in modern-day Southern California. When I pressed him on this point, Kozol, rather lamely I thought, suggested some rabbi friend of his from one of the Beverly Hills temples, those bastions of urban-public-school support.

Parents never seem to play a dynamic role in Kozol's solutions—although, to be fair, parents are missing from almost every public-school policy analysis. This was a group also worth addressing, wasn't it? Particularly affluent educated parents, of a liberal social bent. Kozol himself has said that private schools "starve the public school system of the presence of well-educated, politically effective parents to fight for equity for all kids." If anyone had a bully pulpit from which to address these folks, it was Jonathan Kozol. In such desperate times, why not go from third person to second? Why not

be more aggressive, putting blame where it belonged? So I asked him: "Speaking of moral leaders, since your work is so admired by such magazines as *Harper's* and *The Nation*, why don't you simply exhort those readers to SEND THEIR KIDS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL? How many of those staffers' kids are in elite privates? Talk about Shame of *The Nation*!"

He observed again, doggedly, that if the government RAISED EDUCATIONAL FUNDING, schools would improve and the middle class would naturally return. Ha! I've lost enough cocktail-party arguments to know that social change doesn't happen until economic self-interest is at play. He then admitted—softly and tellingly—that as he himself was not a parent, parents' personal decisions, he would not judge—What? Kozol? Not judge?

Of course Kozol underestimates the potential of parents as a tool for improving public schools. Or perhaps, after decades of his own lost cocktail-party arguments, he has simply given up on them. Instead of exploring the chaotic and the new, Kozol seems more comfortable retilling the familiar territory of his '60s civil-rights jeremiads inhabited by only two cartoonish, archetypal kinds of parents: 1) poor, black, eternally noble, Langston Hughes—quoting parents too beaten down by the system to escape horrible schools; and 2) "savvy," white, affluent parents who successfully connive to get their children into fabulous suburban schools, with nary a look behind them. If he were a parent and had to navigate our hardscrabble world, both the problems and the solutions might appear different to him.

The bad news in our most cosmopolitan and vibrant cities is that many middle-class people can no longer afford to live in "middle-class" school districts. The good news, if my experience is any indication, is that this could drive middle-class white children back into local poor brown schools, and they would come with parents armed with higher educations, the Internet, fiercely lofty expectations, and an ability to read and

(at least vaguely) understand federal legislation. What happens to poor public schools when, God forbid, pushy middle-class, Type A, do-it-yourself PTA mothers become involved and agitate to lift up the boats, not just of their own children but, perforce, of their children's disadvantaged classmates as well?

From the flea's-eye view of a mother who does have a dog in the fight, here is an example:

Back in fall 2005, when my older daughter enrolled at our drab LAUSD school, I was pleasantly surprised—almost shocked (steeped in Kozolalia as I was)—to discover that it was not a blasted wasteland. While aesthetically uninspiring on the outside, inside it was a plethora of books, computers, LeapFrog pads, and the like. Title I schools, such as ours (those with a substantial portion of low-income students), are eligible for hundreds of thousands of federal dollars that affluent schools are not. Our library was stocked, litter was picked up, graffiti erased. As far as I could see, no dusty panes of glass were in danger of shattering at our feet.

Other myths circulating among my chary middle-class cohort turned out to be false. I have yet, for instance, to trip over a crack-addicted parent in the parking lot. The children arrive relatively on time and mostly having breakfasted. True, the climate is probably helped by our wide mix of ethnicities—no one group overwhelms the school, so no minority feels disenfranchised. And because of our “magnet” status, to enroll a child, one must have the shrewdness and drive necessary to procure and fill out a single-page application (the procuring bit being not quite as easy as it sounds), so those families that have done so are—at least in some way, given the relatively wide range in quality of L.A.'s magnet schools—trying to kick things up a notch.

Upon dropping off my daughter one morning, I heard a virtuosic tuba player warming up in the amphitheater; a brass quintet sent by the L.A. Music Center was giving a 90-minute morning assembly. I snuck in, and it was extraordinary—they played Copland and Mozart and Rossini.

Excitedly smelling if not blood in the water, then chardonnay, I soon accumulated more information about all the free stuff the Los Angeles Unified School District has—the music teacher who comes with 65 free instruments, the arts money, and so on. In time I would learn to see the LAUSD as a giant Costco—overcrowded parking, gray lighting, mini-skyscrapers of cat litter—but replete with buried treasure. Free upright pianos in every school, for instance, serviced by LAUSD tuners. No one in my circle knew anything about this, because no one had actually had a child in a public school in years.

I admit to a bias toward high culture. Understand that I grew up the daughter of a culture-mad German mother who, when we traveled abroad, would wheedle ballet mistresses from the Kirov into giving my siblings and me private instruction (plying them, if need be, with eclairs

an orchestra in our school. I see Los Angeles public schoolchildren carrying instruments, and I feel culture and a sense of well-being returning to the land. Instead of exclusive pods of Mexicans, Guatemalans, Armenians, Filipinos, Sikhs with their topknots, Russians—kids whose mothers stand by their cars and chat among themselves in foreign tongues—I would love to think of these children in terms of their instruments—Violins! Flutes! Clarinets! And look, there goes the trombone!—playing together to produce a common language.

So I, Pushy Type A Mother, went into overdrive, working a tricky combo of cell phone, Internet, and a level of public-radio quasi-celebrity that enabled me to at least get information-seeking phone calls returned. (In the public-school world, accurate and up-to-date information is gold, and often surprisingly hard to

Pfizer should develop a special antidepressant—“Zokol: for when you've read too much Kozol.”

and cigarettes), dragged us to *Giselle* 17 times, and forced us to take piano lessons. Our massive Southern California public high school had an orchestra, and I was expected to play *Pictures at an Exhibition*, *The Planets*, and *Petrushka*, even if that meant sitting a rather humiliating seventh chair out of seven violas. Although we fought all of her pushy efforts to foist her old-fashioned, haute-bourgeois culture on us, I would have to say, 40 years later, that my amateur classical musicianship is one of my greatest pleasures. And while I don't believe in the “Mozart effect,” I do maintain that—yes, call me narrow-minded—a tween who reveals some familiarity with any classical composer, as opposed to just, say, the sound track of *Hannah Montana*, is sure to be on the right path. No apologies—I am a clichéd product of my Sino-Germanic box, and I want Mozart for my children!

It may also have been my desire for assimilation that made me yearn to have

come by.) Less exotic weapons included the “You go, girl!” permission of an open-minded school (not all are) and the ability to write standard English (helpful for laying grant-writing groundwork for overworked teachers). Our reward was a generous gift of 36 brand-new stringed instruments from the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, the only requirement being that the school provide instruction. Simple! District rules allowed us to swap our visiting LAUSD choral teacher for a visiting LAUSD instrumental teacher, and upon discovering that district policy provided instrumental instruction only for grades 3 and up, I found two brilliant violinist friends to teach grades K–2. (“Gina and Robin have played at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, but their hearts are first with teaching our kindergartners.” If only I ran a private school, what money I could make!) Next, all we had to do was drum up the dollars to pay for that instruction, approximately \$6,000 per

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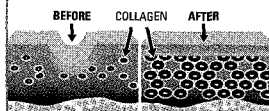
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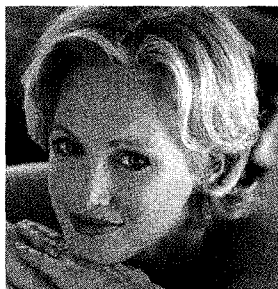


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year to cover two teachers teaching 120 pupils, or \$50 per student. At a wealthy elementary, where a typical suggested yearly booster-club donation is \$500, I would easily have been able to find 12 willing parents. At our ragtag school, by contrast, extracting \$5 for a PTA membership requires a shakedown.

For many of our English-limited new-immigrant parents, the concept of a PTA itself, with its gift-wrap sales, basket raffles, and \$1 Build-a-Bear tickets, is foreign. (At one assembly, a Guatemalan mother pressed a crumpled dollar into my hand and whispered in alarm, "A bear? Why is bear?") Our parents have swum flaming rivers in the dark to flee Third World countries run by despots, but they're terrified of smiling PTA parents wagging plaid Build-a-Bears at them and demanding 8 a.m. elections for things like "parliamentarian." Good Lord, even Saint Patrick's Day can be frightening! Last March, three LAPD cop cars screamed up to our school, waved in off the boulevard by an Egyptian mom who believed the green food coloring our kindergarten teacher had put into the children's water was poison.

The funding hurdle, however, we were able to scramble over as well. The unexpected windfall came courtesy of Hasmik Avetisiyan—winged dark hair, Gucci sunglasses, gold sandals—whom I think of, at our school, as the labor boss of the Armenian mothers. Hasmik (all names and certain accessories changed—slightly—to protect the innocent) had gotten into the morning habit of calling me into her "office"—the parking lot—and hissing at me: "Basketball! We must have basketball! The boys don't know how to play! They are *pooshing* each other!" In no way an impoverished, beaten-down immigrant, Hasmik is an energetic small-business entrepreneur who creates spectacular flower basket-like fantasies out of fruit. Without further ado, Hasmik dragged in the plastic hoops from Target, I crunched the district and insurance paperwork (which is in tiny, tiny English) and secured a student coach, and suddenly two dozen eager children of various colors arrived, replete with parents

bearing video cameras, and each paying an AYSO soccer-sized fee of \$75 for 10 weeks of after-school basketball. With the basketball money in the bank, we could pay our music teachers, and more than 100 enthusiastic children performed at a soaringly successful school concert attended by entertainment-industry executives from New York and L.A. Cue the tears, hugs, cheering, pizza. (After the concert, the Egyptian mother with the food-coloring phobia wept, crushed me to her bosom, and inexplicably snapped my photo.) Everything was so magical, our two beloved violin teachers offered to continue with a summer violin mini-program, at my house. A by-market-rates bargain price of \$20 per week for small-group private lessons, which included a violin, however, drew silence. I dropped the fee to \$10 per week. Still no takers. \$5. Nothing. Finally I opened my arms and implored 120 formerly eager children that if they really wanted to study the

say, I took that family "in hand"—much like a Mafia don—and Julia did play violin all summer. Her uncle drove.

So is this a story of human triumph or cultural imperialism (or, as I like to think of it, cultural evangelism)? I think back to the politically correct '90s, when imposing Western middle-class values on disadvantaged minorities would have been viewed with horror. I think back to Jonathan Kozol's ur-poor black family. With all due respect, what good does it do such families to give up on the educational system and keep defiantly rereading Langston Hughes? In my Los Angeles, the harsh fact is that many underprivileged urban families do not live in Rousseauvian adobe villages. Certainly not all of our poor kids, but many, do indeed live in shabby apartments where books are considered unaffordable, but life revolves around an ever-flickering large-screen TV.

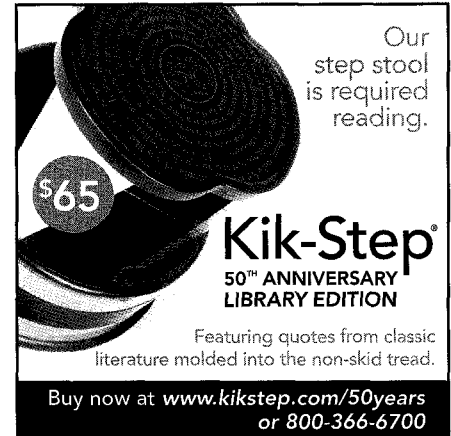
I would learn to see the L.A. school district as a giant Costco—overcrowded parking, gray lighting—but replete with buried treasure.

violin on the weekends, their lessons would be FREE. At this point, my older daughter's 6-year-old classmate Julia tugged on my sleeve. Julia's Salvadoran parents both worked morning to night Saturdays and Sundays at the Panorama City swap meet, which is where this 6-year-old also spent almost every waking minute of her weekend. So her parents could not even drive her to my house.

I bent down to Julia, like Jerry Maguire with his lone client. "OK, Julia! Free violin lessons! Free violin rental! At my house! And I'll even throw in transportation—I will personally drive you ... both ways!" But no—her father was still against it, because he feared that if Julia left his side for even an hour over the weekend, she might "fall in with bad people." (Noted a comedian friend of mine: "Yeah—bad people who might force her to stand at a swap meet all day!") Suffice it to

People used to make music together, singing in churches, playing in bands. Today, music is a commodity, marketed as an item to be possessed by individuals—"my music," people say. The image of a listener is one person, alone, headphones on, entranced by his personal shuffle. It is now de rigueur to mock the sort of genteel suburban '60s childhood I experienced, with its Scout songs like "This Land Is Your Land" and "Bingo Was His Name-O." However, when the 5-year-olds in our kindergarten were asked to name a familiar tune, the one most of them recognized was from *High School Musical*. With today's separation of church and tribe and home country, if public schools don't create a common culture, Disney or Nintendo will.

That so many of L.A.'s English-speaking families are fearful of letting their children come into contact with



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great numbers of English-learners is ironic. The terror is that, like rockets losing heat tiles, Dylan and Taylor will drop a vocabulary word here or an SAT point there, and thus be doomed to Pitzer instead of Brown. Meanwhile, the far more vast and gloomy possibility is that most immigrant children will plunge off the college map entirely. In their isolated, maxed-out schools, they won't master the higher-level English they need if they are to succeed. Such language acquisition could be greatly speeded via meaningful contact with native speakers, but, as the authors of *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* point out, few immigrant youngsters have "even one native English-speaking friend."

That is, until we came along, the pushy, whitish, Type A middle-class poor! Economics has forced us to realize that we are indeed all in this together. We are compelled to play Lady Bountiful. We will bring unneeded extracurricular "enrichment" classes and speak English at them until they turn blue. We must invest in the poor urban school, not because any moral authority à la Jonathan Kozol exhorts us to, but because that school is our school. And in return, we get to be infused with the energy of hopeful immigrants ready to try anything, in a brave new land that, to them (aside from the occasional "bad person" one might encounter in a weekend violin class), itself represents optimism, resources, and a better and better future.

True integration, I think, does not result from a single grand dramatic gesture, like the march on Washington Kozol envisions. True integration evolves from daily, tiny, bridging human moments. To keep this kind of work up for weeks and months and years, there has to be a payoff like improved education for our children. If integration then means gentrification, so be it. In the end, what matters are the children, some of whom, despite reports to the contrary, are doing well. ▀

Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and performer whose radio commentaries appear regularly on American Public Media's Marketplace. She can also be heard on KPCC-FM, in Pasadena, California. Her new book, *Mother on Fire*, will be published this year by Crown.

BOOKS

A newly reissued novel evokes the charms and hatreds of a lost world—
and the enduring contradictions of anti-Semitism.

The 2,000-Year-Old Panic

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

A sour old joke from prewar Germany has two elderly Jews sitting in a Berlin park, with one of them reading a Yiddish paper and the other one scanning the pages of *Der Stürmer*. The latter Jew is laughing. This proves too much for the former Jew, who says: "It's not enough you read that Nazi rag, but you find it funny?" "Look," replies the other. "If I read your paper, what do I see? Jews deported, Jews assaulted, Jews insulted, Jewish property confiscated. But I read *Der Stürmer*, and there's finally some good news. It seems that we Jews own and control the whole world!"

Anti-Semitism is an elusive and protean phenomenon, but it certainly involves the paradox whereby great power is attributed to the powerless. In the mind of the anti-Jewish paranoid, some shabby bearded figure in a distant shtetl is a putative member of a secret world government: hence the enduring fascination of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. (Incidentally, it is entirely wrong to refer to this document of the Czarist secret police as "a forgery." A forgery is a counterfeit of a true bill. The *Protocols* are a straightforward fabrication, based on medieval Christian fantasies about Judaism.)

Of course when Jews do achieve actual power, like the famous Rothschilds, they often become the targets of even more envy than other plutocrats. Political anti-Semitism in its more modern form often de-emphasized the supposed murder of Christ in favor of polemics against monopolies and cartels, leading the great German Marxist August Bebel to describe its propaganda as "the socialism of fools." Peter Pulzer's essential history of anti-Semitism in

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Juden.

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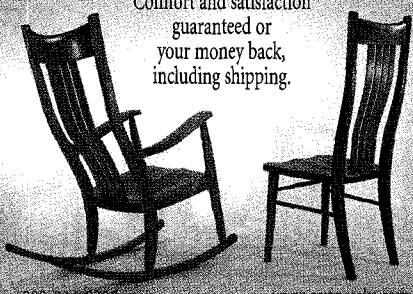
A NAZI PROPAGANDA pamphlet from 1933

pre-1914 Germany and Austria, which shows the element of populist opportunism in the deployment of the Jew-baiting repertoire, is, among other things, a great illustration of that ironic observation.

And then there is the notion of the Jews' lack of rooted allegiance: their indifference to the wholesome loyalties of the rural, the hierarchical, and the traditional, and their concomitant attraction

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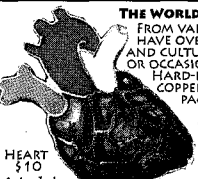


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to modernity. Writing from the prewar Balkans in her *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West noticed this suspicion at work in old Serbia and wrote:

Now I understand another cause for anti-Semitism; many primitive peoples must receive their first intimation of the toxic quality of thought from Jews. They know only the fortifying idea of religion; they see in Jews the effect of the tormenting and disintegrating ideas of skepticism.

The best recent illustration of that point that I know comes from Jacobo Timerman, the Argentine Jewish newspaper editor who was kidnapped and tortured by the death-squad regime in his country in the late 1970s. In his luminous memoir, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, he analyzes the work of the neo-Nazi element that formed such an important part of the military/clerical dictatorship, and quotes one of the "diagnoses" that animated their ferocity:

"Argentina has three main enemies: Karl Marx, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of society; Sigmund Freud, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of the family; and Albert Einstein, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of time and space."

The three cosmopolitan surnames involved in this anti-Trinity, it was made perfectly clear to Timerman between thrusts of the electric cattle prod, were considered to be no coincidence. But notice that this is an anti-Semitism that is full of dread as well as of disgust and contempt. That is perhaps what distinguishes it from other forms of racism. Almost every tribe or ethnicity has a rival tribe or ethnicity that it views as inferior or dirtier or more primitive: the Hutu with the Tutsi, the Sinhalese with the Tamil, the Ulster Protestant with the Irish Catholic, and so forth. The "other" group will invariably be found to have a different smell, a higher birthrate, and a lazier temperament. These poor qualities are

sometimes attributed even by Jews to Jews: elevated German and Austrian Jews once wrinkled their nostrils at the matted sidelocks and large families of the poor *Ostjuden* who had come from the backwoods of Galicia and Silesia; and Ashkenazi-Sephardic rivalry in Israel sometimes recalls and resembles this hostility. But garden-variety racists do not usually suspect the objects of their dislike of secretly manipulating the banks and the stock markets and of harboring a demonic plan for world domination. Gregor von Rezzori, in his newly reissued novel *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*, meshes the micro and macro versions of interwar anti-Semitism very skillfully indeed:

They spent their childhood skipping among mounds of horse dung and flocks of gay sparrows, warbling Hebraic words of wisdom in Jewish schools ... disappearing then to the next town. They returned gangling, cheeky, precocious, and self-confident a couple of years later, unfurled little red flags, and chanted socialistic marching songs; then they went off again. The next time they came back they were unrecognizable—polished, poised, coiffed, and manicured, lugging doctorates on their proud shoulders; they dug themselves in and became dentists, high-school teachers, professors of music, and God only knows what other intellectuals, married similar solid burghers and produced streams of progeny, teaching them to speak refinedly through their noses, packing them off to the Sorbonne to get equipped the better to meddle with the course of the history of civilization.

"Jealousy born of envy" is the way that Rezzori (1914–1998) elsewhere summarizes this combination of anti-intellectualism fused with the hatred of material success and the suspicion of social and international mobility. If the Jew isn't a mutinous prole, he is a stinking bourgeois! (And don't fail to notice those "streams of progeny," even though Jews are not invariably known for their philoprogenitive capacity.)

**MEMOIRS OF
AN ANTI-SEMITES**
by Gregor von Rezzori
New York Review Books

If there was ever a time and place where all these ancient insecurities and uncertainties were allowed their very full scope, it was the terrain of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1918 and the *Anschluss*, or abolition of Austria by its assimilation into Greater Germany, in 1938. The figures of Marx and Einstein and of course Freud were very much imbricated in the numerous interlocking Vienna and Budapest circles, but it's the imaginative literature and literary journalism of that epoch and that space that still make one catch one's breath. Here is the world, now as lost to us as Atlantis, of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* and Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March*; of Stefan Zweig's *Beware of Pity* and Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*. Here, also, are some of the most arresting polemics and feuilletons ever written, by such masters of the genre as Ernst Fischer (whose memoir, *An Opposing Man*, I would propose as one of the great autobiographies of the 20th century) and Karl Kraus. The main reason for the utter erasure and obliteration of this historic territory was precisely the madness of anti-Semitism, which grew to a point where it eclipsed all culture and civilization and became self-destructive and suicidal. Yet it is interesting and sometimes touching to note how many Jews manifested a sympathy with, and even a nostalgia for, the old Austro-Hungarian dispensation. It had had at least a respect for pluralism and for minorities, and Joseph Roth, for one, preferred it to the stark and brutal Teutonic efficiency that aimed to replace it. Karl Kraus (like Roth, a cosmopolitan refugee from Judaism) became famous for saying loftily, when asked why he never wrote anything about Hitler, that nothing occurred to him when he heard the name.

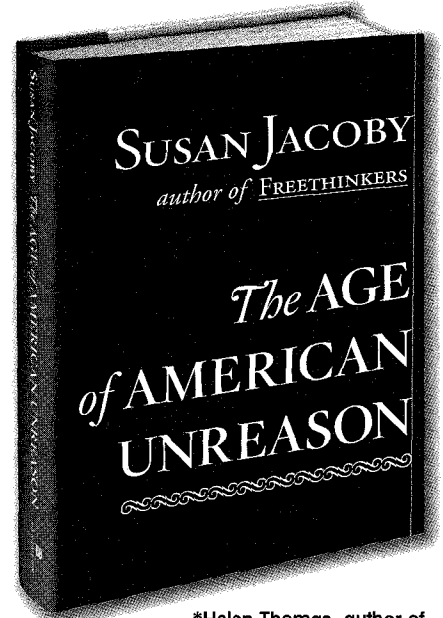
It was once said that Austria's two achievements were to have persuaded the world that Hitler was German and that Beethoven was Viennese. The line might have appealed to Rezzori, whose unreliable narration of Mitteleuropa between the wars is one of the minor (and later—*Memoirs* was first published

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"To a country of underachievers and proud of it, this book delivers a magnificent, occasionally hilarious kick in the pants."
—Jack Miles, author of *God: A Biography*

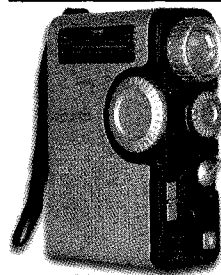


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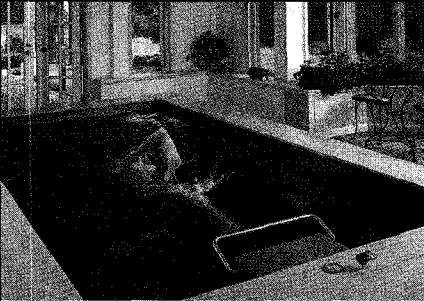
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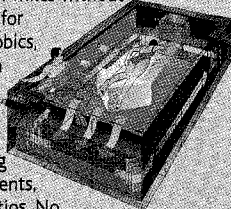
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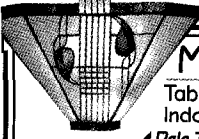
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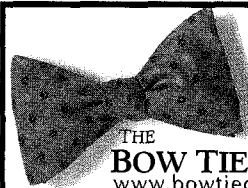
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in 1979) gems of the Austro-Hungarian tradition. In her introduction to this welcome new edition in the library of classics kept evergreen by *The New York Review of Books*, Deborah Eisenberg makes the intriguing claim that Rezzori's "coup" is his ability "to keep his narrator's consciousness severely restricted to the moment it is experiencing, his tone pristinely untouched by the reader's (and author's) indelible awareness of the conflagration about to engulf entire populations." She underlines this by saying, "There is no stain of hindsight—sanctimony, apology, self-exoneration, regret or even sobriety regarding the shattering events that are soon to follow." This is very nearly but not quite true.

children, no doubt destined to mutate into subversive burghers as described above, but the young man's first Jewish acquaintance and contemporary is portrayed as smart, tough, musically gifted to an impressive degree, the son of a leading physician (again something of a stereotype), and inclined to be extremely rude about the stupidity and backwardness of the goyim. In other words, those who expect to be reading of lurid pogroms will be disappointed. Instead, Rezzori's character insinuates with the greatest of subtlety that there is something feminine about the Jew, and that this is what sets him apart from the manly and robust and patriotic characters who like to roar cheery songs rather than listen to the

Anti-Semitism is full of dread, as well as disgust or contempt. This is what perhaps distinguishes it from other forms of racism.

Subtitled as "A Novel in Five Stories," the book mirrors Rezzori's own trajectory as a young man from one of the more distant and umbrageous departments of the Dual Monarchy: the "Bukovina" province that was then Romanian in character and now forms part of Ukraine. Like the *Krajina* between Croatia and Serbia, *Ukraine* basically means "frontier" or "borderland," and Rezzori deftly evokes the sense of coming from "a meeting point (or chafing point, if you will) between two civilizations." He specifies the role of "the steppe winds from the east, opposed [to] the Western in the spirit of a fatalistic resignation to destiny," and the title of his opening story—"Skushno," a Russian word for extreme anomie—could well be the name of an enervating wind like the simoom.

As wonderfully as he evokes the torpid, inspissated atmosphere of this moribund region, Rezzori evokes local anti-Jewish prejudice mostly in its clichéd form, and his narrator, perhaps unreliable in this respect as well, is rather more an observer of the prejudice than (as the novel's title might imply) a carrier of it. Thus, there are hordes of apparently dirty Jewish

tinkling piano, and whose chief joy is the hunt. Apart from his desire to stroke the keyboard in the company of women and his lapses into Jewish vernacular (written off as "yiddling," which has a somehow girlish intonation), young Wolf Goldmann's other defects are his telling fascination with psychoanalysis and his indifference to animals and the outdoors. In a tremendous sentence, the Rezzori character announces, "I forced myself to act toward him with that chivalrous generosity which guards the aristocrat against the ignominy of being resented."

However, young Goldmann is also portrayed as being more sexually knowing than the narrator, and this underemphasized trope of anti-Semitism—of the Jew as the possessor of arcane erotic skills—is taken up more explicitly when Rezzori's character moves from the retarded provinces to the more advanced cities of Bucharest and Vienna. In these locales it is a commonplace among young rakes, and even among young Nazis, to say with a wink and a leer, "A Jewess is no Jew," and Rezzori's young man (who begins urban life as a salesman for "the

Aphrodite Company") takes this as permission first to humiliate a Jewish sexual partner in public and then to carelessly betray a nonsexual Jewish partner in private. In each instance, he seems almost surprised that the females concerned have any emotions, but then, as he phrases it with splendid callousness: "They always expected some calamity, these Jews." (Or, with even more magnificent condescension: "The usually Jewish shopkeepers were kind and mellow people so long as the two-thousand-year-old panic did not flare up, which made them hysterically vehement.")

In general, then, the book at first appears to deal more in the microcosmic elements of *die Judenfrage*: the gossipy and folkloric side of the prejudice, with the grander themes of Nazism, Bolshevism, and Zionism—even Freudianism—occurring distantly offstage. Every now and then, the narrator makes a reference that—*pace* Eisenberg and her praise for his avoidance of the anachronistic—has him showing slightly too much awareness, as well as too little. He several times makes an allusion to the Moldovan town of Kishinev, but never betrays any knowledge of the fact that it had been the site of a Czarist massacre of Jews that made headlines around the world. But on the other hand, really, would a Gentile youth from the Bukovina know at once how to identify and name a "*kupat kerem kay-emet*," or collection-box for the redemption of Palestine, or be able to say of a Jewish woman's bedroom that "it had too much Chagallian poetry"? I think here we can see the reticent figure of Rezzori, who was himself a stateless person for many years, peeping obliquely through the layers of his own story.

It took me a while to make the slightly kitsch connection that had been forming in my mind, and to compare *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* to Bob Fosse's filmic masterpiece *Cabaret*. As with the original Isherwood stories, the action indeed gets along with the help of idiotic remarks made by bigoted landladies, and the wheels are greased by flashy talk of easy money and easy sex. And then the compere of the show turns graphically ugly in

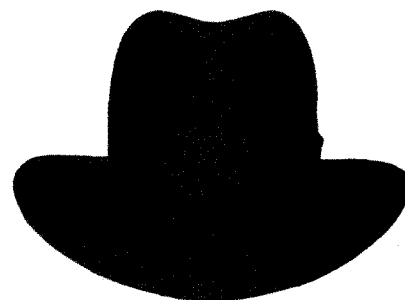
his humor, and the pretty blond youths begin to sing in Horst Wessel tones. With Rezzori, this critical moment comes in his penultimate story, titled "Troth." The real-time name of Adolf Hitler, along with his Austrian comic-opera name of Adolf Schicklgruber, has finally been mentioned, and things are turning nasty and serious. As night falls, the narrator finds himself:

in the middle of an uncanny procession. In blocks that in their disciplined compactness seemed made of cast iron, people marched by thousands, men only, in total silence. The morbid, rhythmic stamping of their feet hung like a gigantic swinging cord in the silence that had fallen on Vienna.

Here is the darkness-haunted mass demonstration in favor of the *Anschluss*. The symbolism is almost perfect. In place of the oddly shaped, anomalous, pluralistic, ironic jigsaw of old Austria-Hungary, there is the stamping, tramping tyranny of the uniformed, square-shaped "block." And the anonymous, faceless robots of this block are bent on one objective above all: the cleansing from the German-speaking lands of "the low, materialistic Jews."

In his essay on Malinowski, Ernest Gellner wrote of how the borderline and marginal peoples of Austria-Hungary needed three things from their benign, whiskered old monarch. They required insurance against mutual fratricide, protection of local and eccentric cultures, and guarantees against the ambitions of Germany and Russia. By giving way first to micro and then to macro anti-Semitism, not only did this fair approximation of a civilization lose its best minds; it lost its collective mind, and thus managed to invite the two worst possible fates by beckoning on first a German, and then a Russian imperium. Writing as he did from the wreckage of postwar Europe, Gregor von Rezzori could claim the peculiar distinction of being one of the few survivors to treat this ultimate catastrophe in the mild language of understatement. This is what still gives his novel the power to shock. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and a *Vanity Fair* columnist.



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BOOKS

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BIOGRAPHY



Lost Genius:

The Curious and Tragic Story of an Extraordinary Musical Prodigy

by Kevin Bazzana (*Carroll & Graf*)

In the opinion of no less an authority than the composer Arnold Schoenberg, the Hungarian pianist Ervin Nyiregyházi was "the person most replete with genius I have ever heard." But when Schoenberg rendered this verdict, Nyiregyházi was already washed-up in his mid-30s, one of those child prodigies whose early success makes them unfit to lead adult lives, personally or professionally. Bazzana (who also wrote about the troubled musician Glenn Gould) tells a sad and often-icky story of sexual excess—a dedicated satyr, the pianist had 10 wives!—and of a decline that took Nyiregyházi from a command performance at Buckingham Palace when he was 8 to a series of seedy California hotels that he inhabited until his death at 84. But the amazing thing about this story is the inextinguishable nature of this man's genius, which kept flickering to life in recordings and odd performances, even incognito on occasion, long after the mainstream musical world had written him off.

The Culture Broker:

Franklin D. Murphy and the Transformation of Los Angeles

by Margaret Leslie Davis (*California*)

Conniving charm may not earn you a high place in Paradise, but it does wonders in this world. A man of enormous energy and quick intelligence, Franklin Murphy came to Los Angeles from the University of Kansas, where he had been chancellor, at exactly the right point in the transformation of that postwar, urban sprawl into something resembling a modern city, and he had the good sense to see its remarkable potential. Under Murphy's leadership

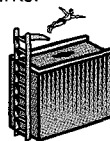
as chancellor, from 1960 to 1968, UCLA emerged as a rival to Berkeley; the Times Mirror Company, where he was CEO from 1968 to 1981, quickly rose to international prominence in the fields of journalism and publishing (it was in these years that the *Los Angeles Times* briefly and brilliantly came to rival *The New York Times*); and many of the area's and the nation's eccentric philanthropists and cultural foundations eventually found in Murphy a reliable adviser and courtly counselor. But those who knew and worked with Murphy, and often shared the "midwestern" values he extolled, would likely have desired a less eulogistic account of his life than this one by Davis, a Los Angeles lawyer and biographer of other local heroes (Edward Doheny, the oil tycoon, and William Mulholland, the engineer who brought water to the city). Here Murphy's warts are too often airbrushed away or viewed as beauty marks.

FICTION

The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen

edited, introduced, and annotated by Maria Tatar; translated by Maria Tatar and Julie K. Allen (*Norton*)

Two centuries after his birth, critics recognize Andersen not only as Denmark's greatest writer but as one of the giants of European literature. In this lavishly illustrated and still more copiously annotated volume, the Harvard professor and noted folklorist Tatar—who has written authoritatively on fairy tales as a genre and on the Grimm Brothers in particular—presents Andersen as a figure just as valuable for adults as for children. She's an excellent guide to the lesser-known stories here, but equally adept when taking a fresh look at such beloved classics as "The Emperor's New Clothes," "The Ugly Duckling," and "The Red Shoes," all in splendid new translations.



His Illegal Self

by Peter Carey (*Knopf*)

The Australian-born, twice Booker Prize-winning Carey, now a New Yorker, doesn't shy away from difficult novelistic feats. This time he tells his story from the point of view of 7-year-old Che, the child of fugitive '60s Harvard radicals. Despite attempts to cocoon him in his grandmother's respectable milieu, Che finds himself on the run in a magical mystery tour circa 1972. Carey uses the third person, but is nonetheless strikingly effective in getting into the boy's mind and heart. The strong, direct prose—particularly the dialogue, spoken and unspoken—is equally attractive, and just right for this picaresque, hard-boiled yet uplifting tale.

Diary of a Bad Year

by J. M. Coetzee (*Viking*)

Beethoven Was One-Sixteenth Black and Other Stories

by Nadine Gordimer (*FSG*)

Here are the two white South African Nobel laureates in literature: he in the prime of his career, but misanthropic and negative as he surveys today's world; she, an octogenarian bereft of her husband of nearly 50 years, yet full of zest, openness, and enterprise as she lets her imagination and interests roam far and freely. The deceased in Gordimer's world seem more alive than the characters still breathing in Coetzee's. In "Dreaming of the Dead," Gordimer summons her dead friends Edward Said and Susan Sontag to a New York Chinese restaurant, and the group is still as passionate about prawns as about Palestine. To Señor C, Coetzee's alter ego, just about the only ray of sunshine amid such predictable horrors as Bush, Cheney, and Guantánamo is the continuing presence of Bach's music. Gordimer, in her 84th year, displays her characteristic gusto as she experiments with literary form and function in "Alternative Endings," showing how she could end a story in three



different ways based on the three senses of sight, hearing, and smell. Even when Coetzee attempts ventriloquism—as he writes in the voices of two young Australians—he fails to break through the fog of his self-absorption. Only remembering a famous passage in *The Brothers Karamazov* can unfreeze C, and a brief mention of his uncontrollable weeping at this memory is the emotional high point—after more than 200 pages of wasteland. The main action of Coetzee's disjointed novel consists of C's contemplating his navel and reflecting, endlessly and not very artfully, a seemingly limitless disgust. Readers in search of a wallow in *schadenfreude* should go for *Diary of a Bad Year*, but all others should grab Gordimer's latest bag of sparkling short stories.

HISTORY



Sin in the Second City

by Karen Abbott (*Random House*)

If any American bordello achieved high repute, it was the luxurious Everleigh Club in Chicago at the turn of the last century. Here, such writers as Theodore Dreiser and Edgar Lee Masters were enthusiastic clients, as was the local merchant prince Marshall Field Jr., who may have been fatally shot there. The Everleighs were adept at covering up scandal; even visiting royalty could publicly express a desire to drop by this famed house of ill repute. When Prince Henry of Prussia (Kaiser Wilhelm's brother) visited Chicago in 1902, the Everleigh Club feted him with a consciously Dionysian tableau featuring a fake bull and real raw meat. Abbott tells her story with just the right mix of relish and restraint, providing a piquant guide to a world of sexuality neatly wrapped in just enough respectability to not merely survive but flourish until the Mann Act finally led to its closure in 1911.

The Wreck of the Medusa: The Most Famous Sea Disaster of the Nineteenth Century

by Jonathan Miles (*Grove/Atlantic*)

Wreck of the Medusa: Mutiny, Murder, and Survival on the High Seas

by Alexander McKee (*Skyhorse*)

In 1816, the *Medusa*, a French frigate en route to West Africa, came to grief on the Bank of Arguin, several miles

off the Senegalese coast. Passengers and crew clambered aboard lifeboats and a makeshift raft; but efforts to tow the raft failed, and the 150-some souls aboard it—abandoned by the captain—were left behind. What followed was a fortnight of death, madness, and cannibalism. When rescuers at last arrived, they encountered only 15 survivors.

The story is riveting enough on its own macabre merits, but Miles makes it more gripping still, chiefly through his deft reconstruction using scattered accounts and conflicting records. He also makes a wise casting decision: as heroes, we get the *Medusa* survivor Alexandre Corréard and the contemporary painter Théodore Géricault (whose famous 1819 work has long been visual shorthand for the horrifying episode and its aftermath). Miles uses their contrasting personalities and circumstances to forge a sort of Gallic Woodward-and-Bernstein dialectic, then pits the pair against the newly restored Bourbon monarchy and its shameful post-disaster attempts at saving face by suppressing the facts.

The volume by the maritime writer McKee (first published in 1975; this is its second reissue) is just as worthy as the Miles book, albeit far less readable. Perhaps owing to the reconstructive difficulties outlined above, the strangely uneven tone here—alternately poetic and prosaic (sometimes from sentence to sentence)—is occasionally confounding. McKee does best when he contextualizes the disaster, showing how the recently felled French Empire “was reflected in miniature aboard the *Medusa*,” and how the whole episode—from the maddening incompetence of the ship's captain (a glorified customs officer favored by Louis XVIII's brother), to the near-absent command structure aboard the raft (which facilitated the entropy), to the later disgraces perpetrated by the Bourbons—was a profound allegory for post-Napoleonic collapse. (Indeed, the political scramble after Waterloo may have indirectly doomed the voyage well before its launch.) Ultimately, though, this tale—an oddly ineluctable story of human suffering and endurance, cruelty and compassion—fairly tells itself. As such, both books are essential entries in the survival-literature canon.

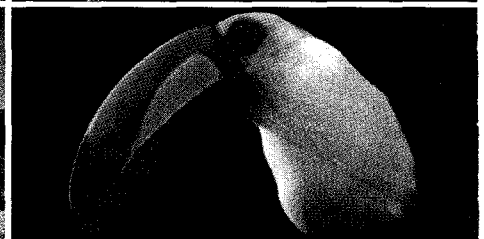
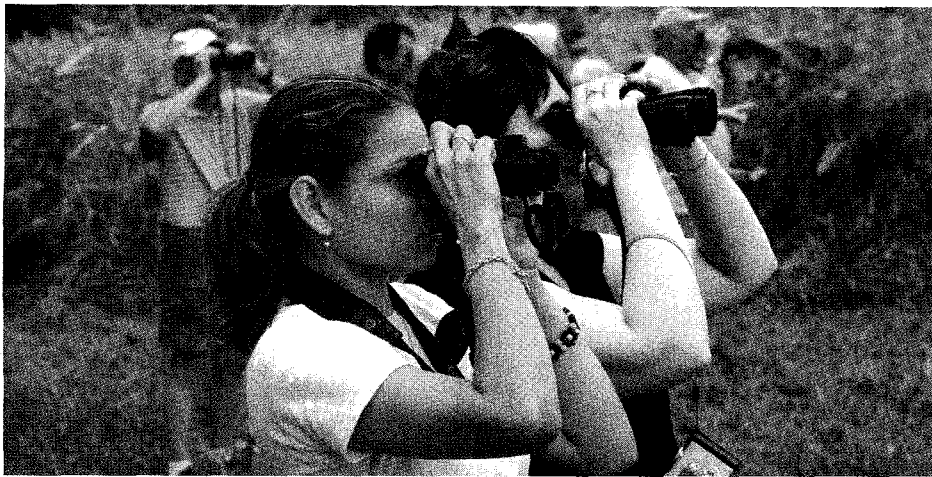
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TRAVELS

Searching for tranquility in the monastery Franco built

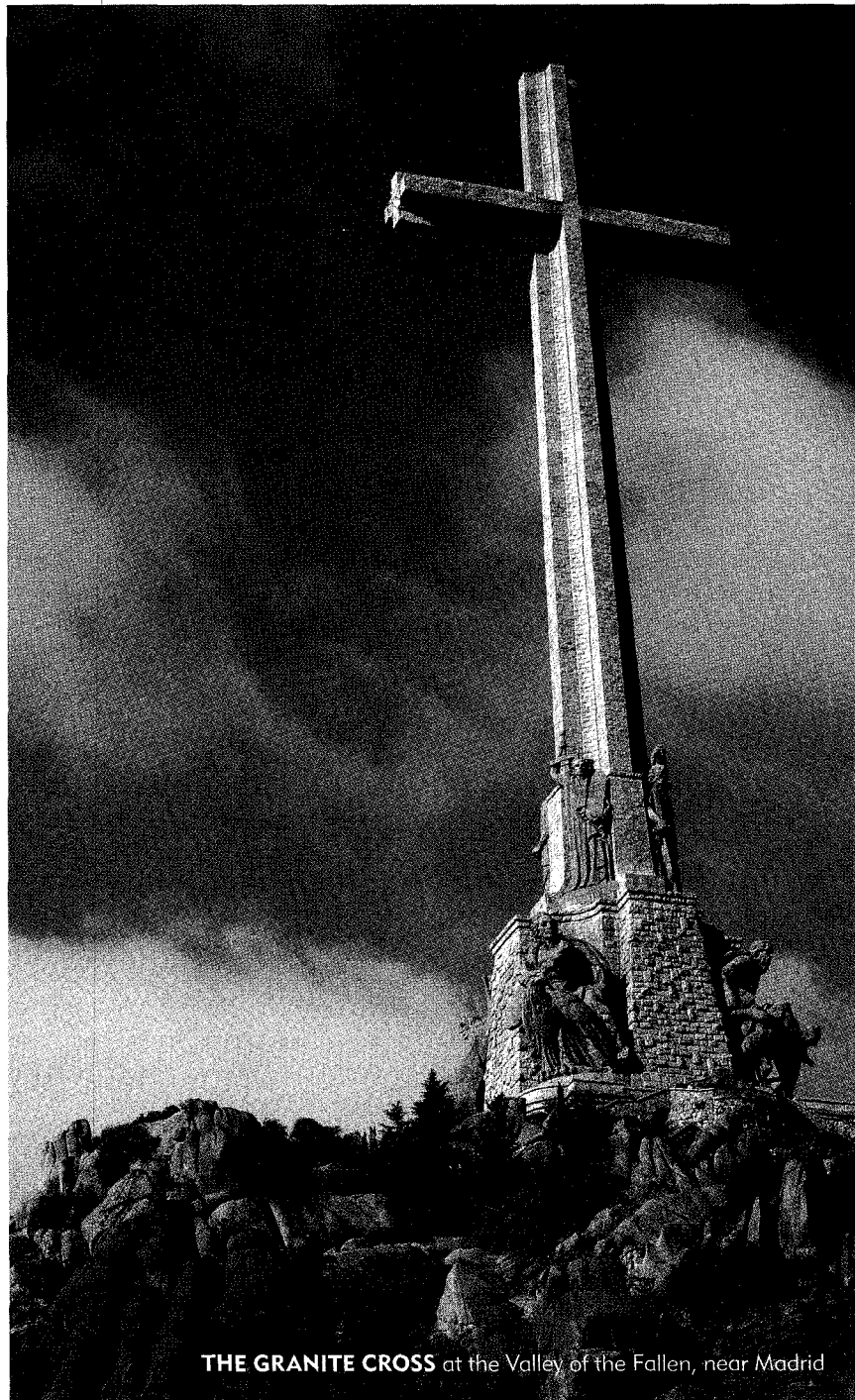
The Caudillo's Cloister

BY FRANCIS X. ROCCA

Part of me has always wanted to be a monk. Ever since I read Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, in my senior year of college, I've fantasized about forsaking worldly cares and goods for what Merton called the "four walls of my new freedom." And like many other moviegoers, I was captivated by the image of cloistered life in the recent surprise hit *Into Great Silence*, a documentary about a Carthusian monastery in the French Alps. That film's vision of order and peace seemed the perfect antidote to the 21st-century lifestyle. Though I had not practiced Catholicism or any other faith since I was 12, I longed to partake of such tranquility, at least for a few days.

As it happens, monasteries are commonly accessible to outsiders, and always have been. In his seminal *Rule* for the religious life, the sixth-century Saint Benedict of Nursia enjoined his followers to "let all guests that come be received like Christ Himself." Among those guests were the crowned heads of Europe, who during the Middle Ages were drawn to monasteries, abbeys, and convents by their vitality as centers of learning and culture, and by the presence of holy men (or women) who would pray for royal souls after death. Sticking close to monks also reinforced the all-important belief that the sovereign ruled by divine right.

Nowhere were such institutions more prominent than in Spain, where monasticism retained its influence far longer than elsewhere in western Europe. As late as the second half of the 16th century, King



THE GRANITE CROSS at the Valley of the Fallen, near Madrid

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For a slideshow of the Valley of the Fallen and the Escorial, narrated by Francis Rocca, visit www.theatlantic.com/monasteries.

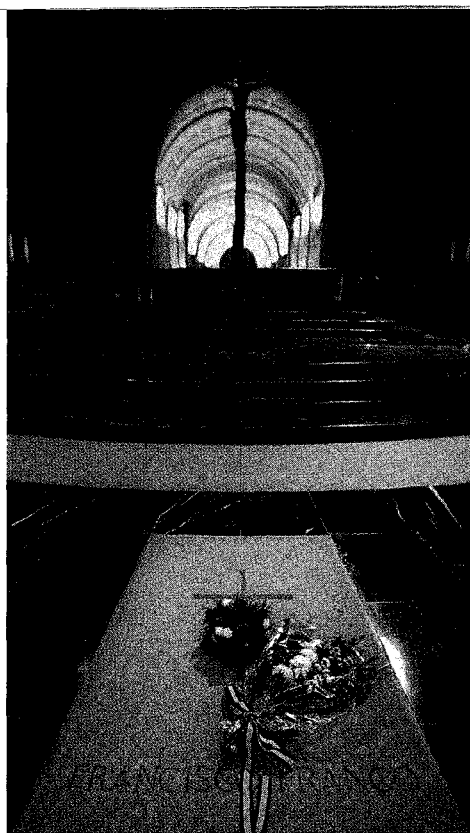
PHILIPPE DESMAZES/AP/GETTY IMAGES

Philip II built the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo of the Escorial, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture 30 miles outside of Madrid. And just a few miles from the Escorial is the youngest royal monastery in Spain, finished only half a century ago. What makes the monastery of the Holy Cross of the Valley of the Fallen more than just an anachronistic curiosity is the fact that it is part of a complex built by the dictator Francisco Franco to memorialize those killed in the Spanish civil war. Franco himself lies buried in the basilica, near some 40,000 of those who died in battle.

When I learned that the Valley accepts guests, in both the monastery and external lodgings, the idea of staying with the monks immediately intrigued me. Not only could I satisfy my desire for a retreat; I might also learn something about the relationship between religion and temporal power. How, I wondered, did the monks carry on under the burden of their institution's origins? And could a stay inside Franco's monastery help me to understand the mind-set of a man who styled himself "Caudillo of Spain by the grace of God"?

The Sierra de Guadarrama, a 120-mile-long chain of mountains northwest of Madrid, has historically been a refuge for urbanites escaping the heat of the Castilian plain. The Spanish kings built summer palaces there, and their courtiers followed suit; even now, the Sierra remains a weekend and vacation destination for residents of the capital. Yet in recent decades, urban sprawl and the booming Spanish real-estate market have transformed much of the area into bedroom communities. Shopping centers and billboards are common sights.

The suburban atmosphere ends abruptly, though, at the Valley of the Fallen. For one thing, the entrance is manned by officers of the Civil Guard. A military-police guard for a monastery might seem odd, but the complex is part of the National Patrimony of sites officially belonging to the Kingdom of Spain.



FRANCO'S TOMB, in the Valley's underground basilica

Because of its association with Franco, it is also a potential target of political violence (left-wing terrorists set off a bomb in the basilica in 1999).

A steep road leads from the gate up through three and a half miles of forest to the monastery. Along the way, signs warn of the fire hazard from accumulated pine needles, and of animals, such as wild boar, that might cross one's path. Although the basilica is a popular tourist attraction on weekends, on the weekday afternoon in late spring when I arrived, mine was the only car on the road. Eventually I found myself in a large esplanade bounded on one side by the monastery and on the other by a guesthouse. After knocking on several doors, I located the *padre hospedero*, the monk in charge of guests. Although my arrival had interrupted his siesta, Padre Isidoro, as I'll call him (he asked me, for the sake of humility, not to use his real name), was much friendlier, in a teasing way, than I had expected from his peremptory manner over the phone. Which was a good thing, since he was the only monk with whom I was supposed to speak.

After showing me to my room in the monastery (sparsely furnished but spacious and clean, with its own bathroom

and shower), Padre Isidoro gave me a tour of the monastery and its grounds: the cloister garden; the chapel, with its modern bas-reliefs of the miracles of Saint Benedict; the cemetery, where past members of the community are buried amid naturalistic arrangements of lichen-covered rocks; and above all, the cross—a granite icon that with its base stands almost a thousand feet tall and is visible from 25 miles away.

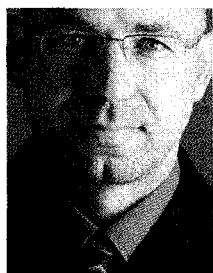
"This was an act of faith, no?" Padre Isidoro said, gazing up with evident satisfaction. "The cross by which we are all redeemed." There seemed no point in mentioning that not everyone who built the cross or the structure beneath it did so out of faith. Many of the workers, at least 14 of whom died during construction, were political prisoners from the losing side of the civil war (they received time off their sentences for their "voluntary" participation).

Next Padre Isidoro gave me a copy of the schedule and rules. To my surprise, I saw that I was expected to attend the daily liturgy of the hours of Lauds, Vespers, and Compline, at 8:15 a.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:30 p.m. respectively, as well as Mass at 11 a.m.—almost four hours of religious observances per day, with "punctuality recommended." There was also a curfew of 10 p.m.—normally the start of the Spanish dinner hour.

With such a heavy worship regimen (I had frankly expected something a bit more *laissez-faire*), I would clearly have to scrap most of my tourism plans. I would not, after all, be taking in the area's several medieval castles or the spectacular Roman aqueduct at Segovia. Nor would I be visiting the small Picasso museum in Buitrago del Lozoya, which houses a collection assembled by the painter's longtime barber. Instead of sampling the exquisite *cochinillo asado* (roast suckling pig) for which the Sierra's restaurants are renowned, I would be dining on potato salad and fried eggs in the refectory, eating in silence while one of the monks read aloud from the biography of a saint. It was just as well that

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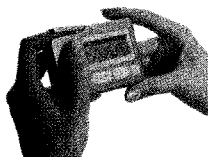
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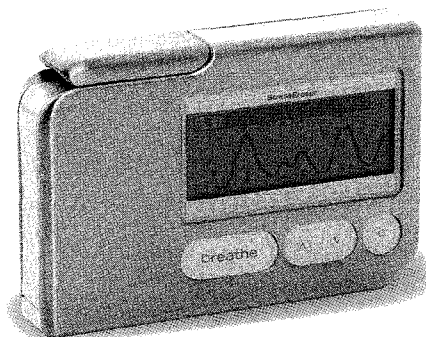
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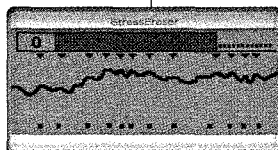
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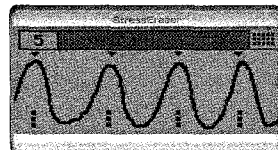
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LAD-00086-RevC

I had no interest in the many local opportunities for rock climbing, because there would be no time for that, either.

Since I had no pious thoughts to occupy me, the solitude and silence to which I had so looked forward soon became oppressive. The experience began to feel like the opposite of Merton's paradoxical freedom; now I understood why the words *cloister* and *claustrophobia* derived from the same root. To console myself, I opened a bottle of liqueur that I had bought at the guesthouse's gift shop, originally as a souvenir. The copy of Benedict's *Rule* in my room offered

some justification for this indulgence: "making allowance for the weakness of the infirm," chapter 40 grants each monk "one *hemina* [about 10 ounces] of wine per day." Certainly the sweet liqueur, made from the monks' own recipe, enhanced my enjoyment of chapel. At 76 proof, however, it was probably not the dosage Benedict had had in mind.

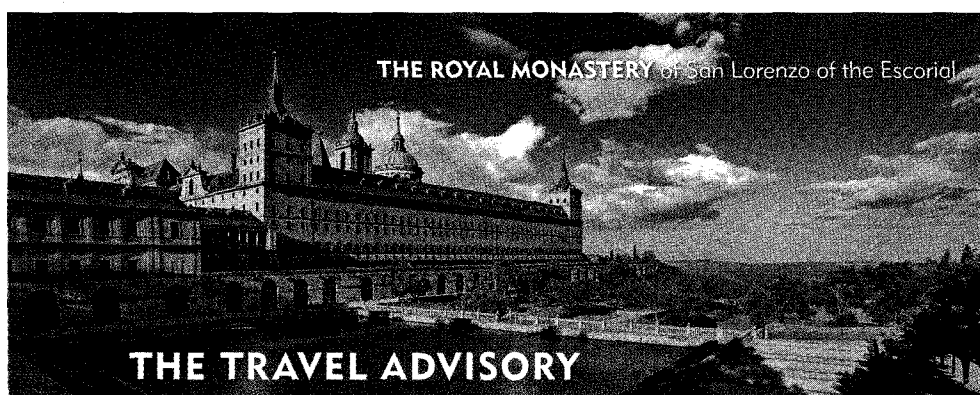
I did manage to get out long enough to visit the Escorial. The building tends to inspire strong, even violent, reactions, and it's not hard to see why: its austerity and symmetry can seem cold, even inhumane. Nor does it help that its founder

played a leading role in the "black legend" of Spanish Catholic fanaticism. (Philip, who ordered the Armada to sail against England, was at the Escorial when he learned of its defeat.) The British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper called the building, with its collection of 7,000 saints' relics, an expression of Philip's "cannibal egotism." Franco, who considered himself Philip's heir as defender of Spanish Catholicism, clearly took Juan de Herrera's design for the Escorial (readily identifiable by its peaked slate roofs and paucity of ornament) as inspiration for his own monastery-mausoleum. Back at the Valley, with the Escorial fresh in my mind, I found this influence both striking and illuminating.

Each morning, at 20 minutes before 11, I followed the monks down a 300-foot-long passageway, up which a frigid draft blew constantly. The tunnel, cut straight into the mountain, was lit by candelabra fitted with dim energy-saving light bulbs, and evoked the set of an old Christopher Lee horror movie. At the far end was an elevator that took us more than 150 feet down to the basilica, also known as the crypt—the heart of the complex.

Carved out of the mountain, and in the shape of a cross, the sanctuary is 850 feet long; the main altar sits under a dome more than 120 feet tall at its peak. The barrel-vaulted nave made me think of a Washington, D.C., subway station, only with tapestries depicting the Apocalypse hanging from the walls. There is practically no natural light, and at the moment of consecration during the Mass, the entire space goes dark except for a pair of spotlights trained on the altar. The place feels just like what it is—a gigantic tomb.

In fact, darkness is one of several features that starkly distinguish the Valley from the Escorial, which, in spite of its coldness, is a vast receptacle of light, with hundreds of windows and more than a dozen courtyards. The two constructions are also hugely separated by standards of quality. From the granite-and-marble statues of Old Testament kings above the main courtyard, to the



THE ROYAL MONASTERY of San Lorenzo of the Escorial

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Monastery Lodgings

Staying in monasteries and convents is a culturally enriching and cost-effective way to visit Spain and the other countries of Catholic Europe. (My room and meals at the Valley of the Fallen, for example, were just 20 euros a day.) Standards of comfort and convenience vary, so ask in advance about such amenities as a private bath and telephone. Eileen Barish's *The Guide to Lodging in Spain's Monasteries* gives detailed information about some 150 institutions.

The Valley of the Fallen

(011-34-91-890-5411; ask for the *padre hospedero*, and be prepared to speak in Spanish) accommodates only men in the monastery proper; guests here are expected to attend several hours of worship daily. The external guesthouse (011-34-91-890-5511) is open to women and children as well, and visitors can come and go without the constraints of scheduled services. The Valley and the **Escorial**—the 16th-century monastery built by Philip II—are within an hour's drive of Madrid.

Nearby Attractions

The Sierra de Guadarrama's many activities are all an easy day trip from Madrid. Visitors to Segovia can see a Roman aqueduct, medieval castle, and late-Gothic cathedral and sample especially fine regional cuisine at the **Mesón de Cándido** (Calle Azoguejo, 5), whose proprietor boasts the title of "Major Innkeeper of Castile." Classic dishes include *cochinillo asado* (roast suckling pig) and *cordero asado* (roast baby lamb).

In the medieval walled town of Buñtrago del Lozoya, the **Picasso Museum** (Plaza de Picasso, 1; www.madrid.org/museo_picasso) exhibits drawings, lithographs, and other objects—including an engraved wooden box for haircutting tools—made by the artist for his longtime friend and barber, Eugenio Arias.

Opportunities for hiking are plentiful (the climb up **Mount Abantos** from the Escorial is particularly breathtaking), and the granite massif of La Pedriza in the **Cuenca Alta del Manzanares Regional Park** offers challenges for beginning and expert rock climbers alike.

blue *azulejo* tiles in the royal apartments (to say nothing of the Titians, El Grecos, and Riberas), the Escorial has borne up splendidly over four centuries. The Valley is already going to seed. Water stains that look like streaks of guano from enormous pigeons mar the basilica's walls. The colossal statue of Saint John the Evangelist, at the base of the mountain-top cross, is missing a chunk of his left foot. Above all, the Escorial's harmonious proportions put the oppressive gargantuanism of the Valley to shame.

As the Escorial is a monument to Philip's Hapsburg dynasty, the Valley is unabashedly a monument to Franco, who lies buried behind the main altar, his gravestone always covered with fresh flowers. The Caudillo's coat of arms is carved three times into every one of the basilica's pews and also above the door to the choir in the apse. Yet for the work of a 20th-century tyrant, the Valley is in a way remarkably modest. Franco's name is present only on his gravestone, and his image is nowhere to be found. Where Stalin or Saddam would have crowned the edifice with a self-aggrandizing statue, Franco put a cross.

It was an astute choice. Three decades after the advent of Spanish democracy, the cross is still there; a statue surely would not be. The Valley is thus a fitting symbol of Franco's regime, which owed its longevity largely to its symbiosis with the most-traditional elements in Spanish society and culture, and with none more closely than the Church.

Padre Isidoro referred to Franco often during my visit, and always with respect, but never in a political context, only as founder of the Valley. Politics is something the monks obviously wish they could forget all about. He also showed me a book by one of the monks, for sale in the guesthouse foyer (though not in the basilica gift shop, where most visitors go). The book, whose cover bears a photograph of its subject kneeling in prayer, is titled *Francisco Franco: Exemplary Christian*. Just the way he wished to be remembered. ▀

Francis X. Rocca lives in Rome, where he is the Vatican correspondent for Religion News Service.

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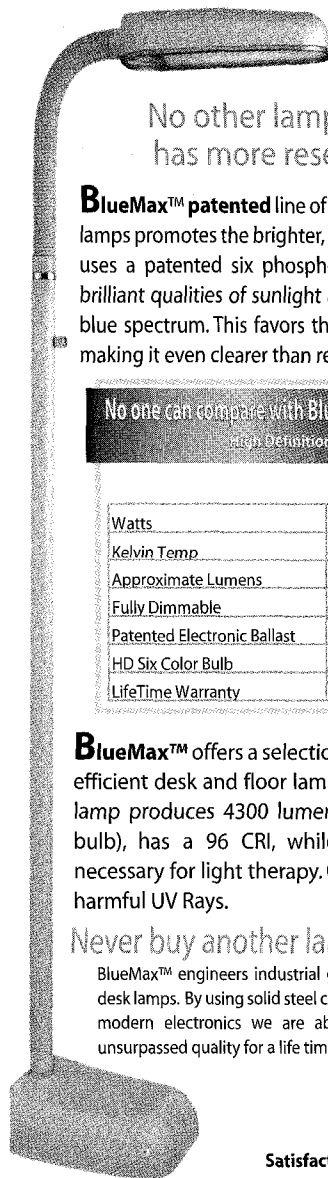
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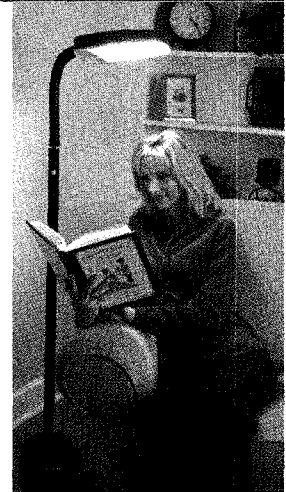
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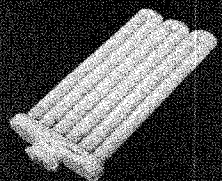
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FOOD

Three Tuscan recipes to welcome spring

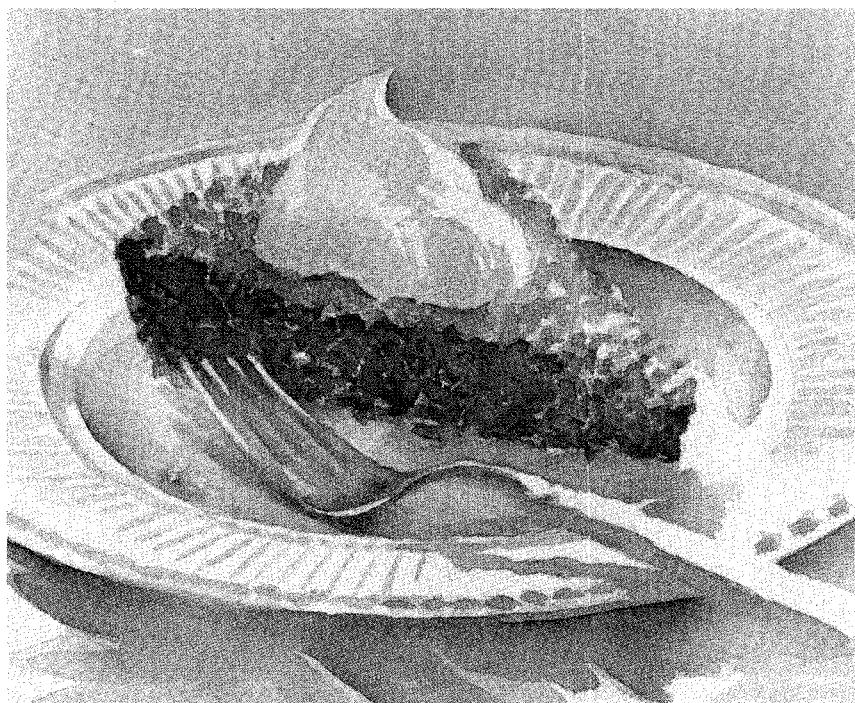
Simple Pleasures

BY CORBY KUMMER

That Italian food is simple will come as no surprise. That it is, at its heart, friendly and willing to forgive many errors might explain its popularity among both cooks and diners. An Italian recipe will elicit praise even after minimal but sincere effort—like a faltering attempt to speak the language, which natives usually greet with “How did you learn to speak such good Italian?” (The French response will, of course, be in English.) Hence my eager anticipation last year of *Adventures of an Italian Food Lover*, by Faith Heller Willinger, and of a scholarly work years in the making: *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*, by the longtime food historian Gillian Riley, a magisterial (recipe-less) book that anyone even mildly interested in the subject must own.

Unlike the *Companion*, which encourages you to read entry after entry for the pleasure of learning marvelous oddments about the obscure and the familiar, *Adventures* is a distillation of its author’s big, exuberant personality. An American expat, Willinger has lived in Florence for more than 30 years, all of them devoted to Italian food and the people who make it. She is now forager in chief for American food luminaries from Mario Batali to Alice Waters, who call her before they visit Italy to find out which restaurants and artisanal producers they must not miss. Her wry subtitle, *With Recipes From 254 of My Very Best Friends*, is hardly an exaggeration: she is ceaselessly generous to her friends (I am lucky to be one), and thus they to her.

Charmingly illustrated with watercolors by the author’s sister, Suzanne, *Adventures* is less a cookbook than a collection of sketches of chefs, winemakers, and innkeepers, all of whom you would be well advised to visit. Housebound,



A FLOURLESS WALNUT TORTE with only three ingredients

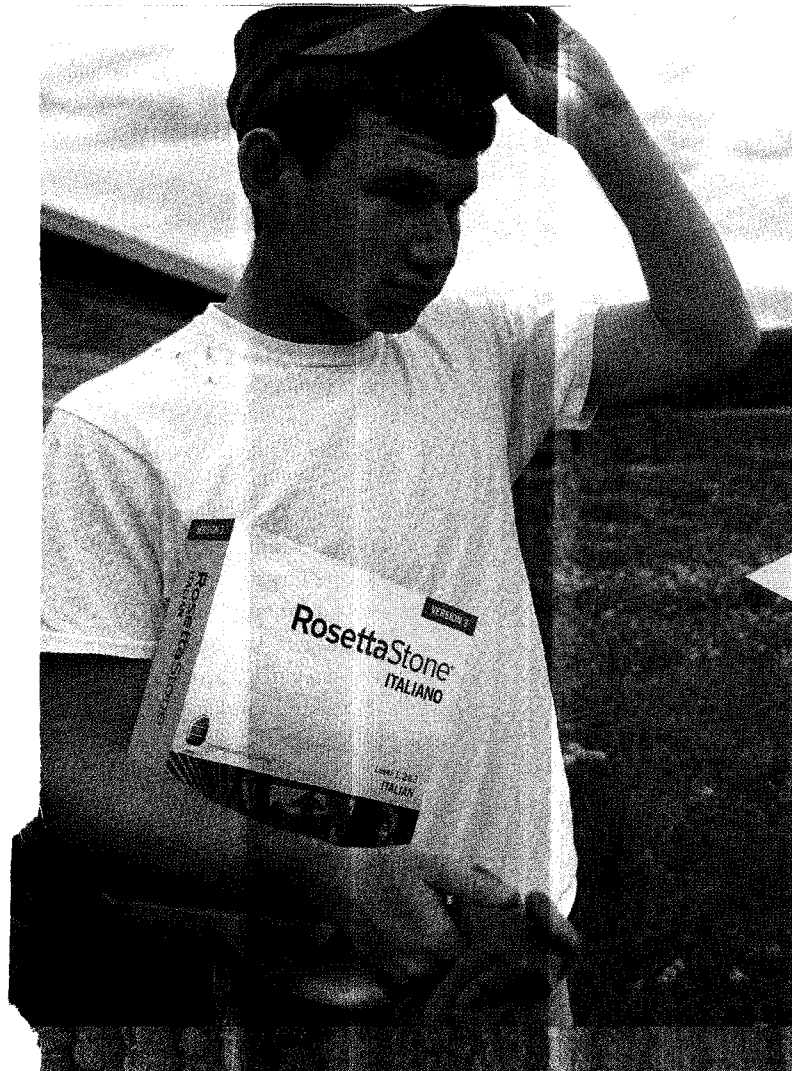
I turned to it for a few recipes to tide me through the winter, and found several as friendly and forgiving as the author. Two immediately became staples, and a third, not quite so forgiving—a very unusual cake with only three main ingredients—will fulfill my and many another frustrated cook’s quest for a new Passover dessert.

Recipes you use all the time adjust to what you have on hand: as Tuscans say, *Che c’è c’è*, meaning “What we’ve got is what there is.” A good illustration is Willinger’s recipe for lentil soup, which requires very little time, start to finish, and takes advantage of lentils’ adaptability. Alone among pulses, lentils need no advance soaking or long boiling—just rinsing and 45 minutes of cooking, after which they achieve the pleasing floury

texture they keep even after reheating. The current fashion among cooks is *lenticilles de Puy*, which the French have promoted as the caviar of lentils. Italy has its own prized lentils. They don’t have a fancy name, just a place famous for them: the “uplands of Umbria,” Riley’s entry says, which grow “small fragrant” lentils (you can order some from www.gustiamo.com).

The soup can be made in an hour and gets better as days go by as it keeps absorbing its few potent flavors—especially that of good olive oil, which somehow turns into a fragrance as well as a flavor. This is appropriate, given that the recipe comes from the olive-oil consultant Maurizio Castelli, who has helped improve the quality of several Tuscan oils (the kind actually from Tuscany, as

SYLVIA HOFFLUND



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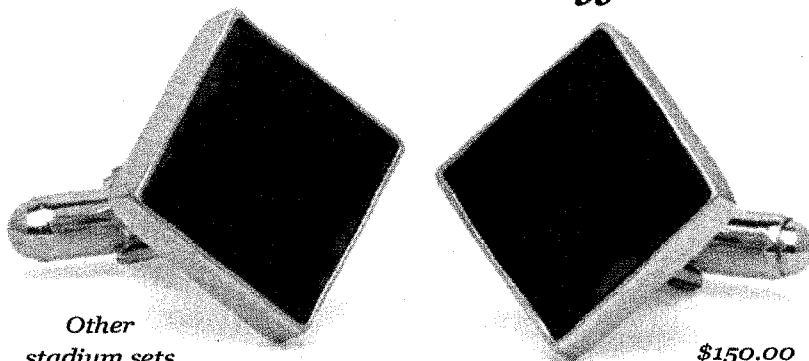


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opposed to the many that are only bottled there) and has overseen the production at McEvoy Ranch, in northern California (see "Domestic Reserves," January/February 2006).

For a soup that can serve four to six (or two for a week if it's replenished with water, stock, or chopped-up leftovers), heat a quarter cup of the best olive oil you have in a heavy-bottomed two-quart pot. Over medium-high heat, sauté one large carrot, one large celery stalk, one medium red onion, and one medium leek, all finely diced (the soup won't be pureed), and two garlic cloves smashed with the flat of a knife and minced with a sprinkling of coarse salt. (If you can't find a leek, use a second red onion.) Stir with a wooden spoon until the vegetables soften, about seven minutes; they should just begin to brown. Add one cup of rinsed lentils, five cups of water, and a teaspoon of salt (Willinger likes sea salt from Sicily). Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer, partially covered, for about 45 minutes, skimming off any scum that rises. Taste for salt, grind in some pepper, and let the soup rest, covered, for at least 20 minutes before serving.

A thread of fresh olive oil added just before serving, Riley points out, "gives a hot dish ... a last-minute charge of flavour as the heat releases the aromas." Willinger recommends it, too, along with some minced uncooked leek. But the soup is a pure demonstration of Tuscan simplicity and of the Tuscan love of beans and oil, and it can do without any garnish.

Willinger's "sweet and sour chicken bites," a recipe from a chef in a southern Tuscan village, also focuses on a very few direct flavors—here rosemary and sage, the two resinous herbs that power many Tuscan dishes, particularly bean dishes—and turns them into a greater whole. The bite-size honey-and-vinegar-glazed nuggets of boned chicken thigh, skewered with toothpicks, make terrific party food. Or, like the soup, they can be the basis for dinner for a few days (the recipe is easily doubled). They go well with, say, vegetable stir-fries, and would also be a good main course served over not-so-Tuscan rice: you'll be reminded of teriyaki,

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although they're made without a drop of soy sauce or its sometime surrogate, balsamic vinegar (and with very little salt).

For a substantial hors d'oeuvre for four to six people or as a main course for two, cut four boneless, skinless chicken thighs into one-inch pieces. (It's quick and easy to bone thighs yourself.) Mince together one garlic clove, smashed and peeled; a teaspoon each of chopped fresh rosemary and sage leaves; and a half teaspoon each of fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Coat the chicken pieces with the dry rub, cover, and leave them in the refrigerator to marinate for at least two hours or overnight. When you're ready to cook, make the glaze by stirring together two tablespoons of mild honey with a quarter cup of white-wine vinegar. (I had red, and it turned the pieces

solstice." Italian Jews have a knack for flourless walnut tortes, which show off one of the country's finest, though least recognized, products (hazelnuts get the attention) and are ideal for Passover as well as for the increasing number of people who avoid eating wheat flour. The area south of Naples grows exceptional walnuts that can redefine your idea of how they should taste.

The best torte I know, *torta del re* ("king's torte"), comes from Edda Servi Machlin's *Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews*, one of my favorite cookbooks and a record of the vanished culture of the once largely Jewish village of Pitigliano, in the hills of southern Tuscany. Like most tortes, that truly regal cake requires lengthy beatings of egg yolks and whites; many also call for nut flour, which is hard

the sides of the pan. Measure two cups of fresh whole walnuts and chop them. The recipe says "coarse." How coarse? Finer than bagged chopped walnuts: a bit smaller than Rice Krispies—or, to use a Passover analogy, the size for *haroset*, the walnut-and-sweet-wine "mortar" whose arrival is a high point of every seder.

In a small saucepan over very low heat, stir together three egg whites and one-third cup sugar with a wooden spoon. If you keep the heat very low, the whites won't start to coagulate into long strands, as they do in *stracciatella*, egg-drop soup (and as they did on my first try). Instead, the mixture will slowly become an off-white slush; after about eight minutes, it will begin to pull away from the bottom of the pan as you stir. After 10 to at most 15 minutes, it will resemble loose cream of wheat or grits. When all the whites are opaque, turn the mixture into a two-quart bowl and stir in the chopped nuts. The whites will just coat them and will have the texture of spackle. In another bowl, which should be clean and dry, whip three more egg whites with a good pinch of salt until they mound and form soft peaks. Watch them carefully as soon as the beater starts to leave swirling tracks; don't overbeat, or the mixture will begin to break like a melting glacier. The peaks should be firm but not pert.

Mix half a cup of the beaten egg whites into the nut mixture and then use a spatula to carefully fold in the rest in two or three additions. The batter won't be light and airy, but it will spread easily in the baking pan. Sprinkle it evenly with two tablespoons of sugar and bake for an hour, until a toothpick or a fine knife comes out clean and the top is a light golden brown. Let cool.

Because the torte is barely sweet, it needs dressing up with whipped cream and fruit—ideally, the season's first strawberries, albeit trucked in from someplace warm. The veil of crunchy sugar and the soft nut pieces, sweet on their own, make it very easy to nibble. Unlike the almost endlessly extendable lentil soup, this won't last for days. ■

Corby Kummer is an Atlantic senior editor.

The soup is a pure demonstration of Tuscan simplicity and of the Tuscan love of beans and oil.

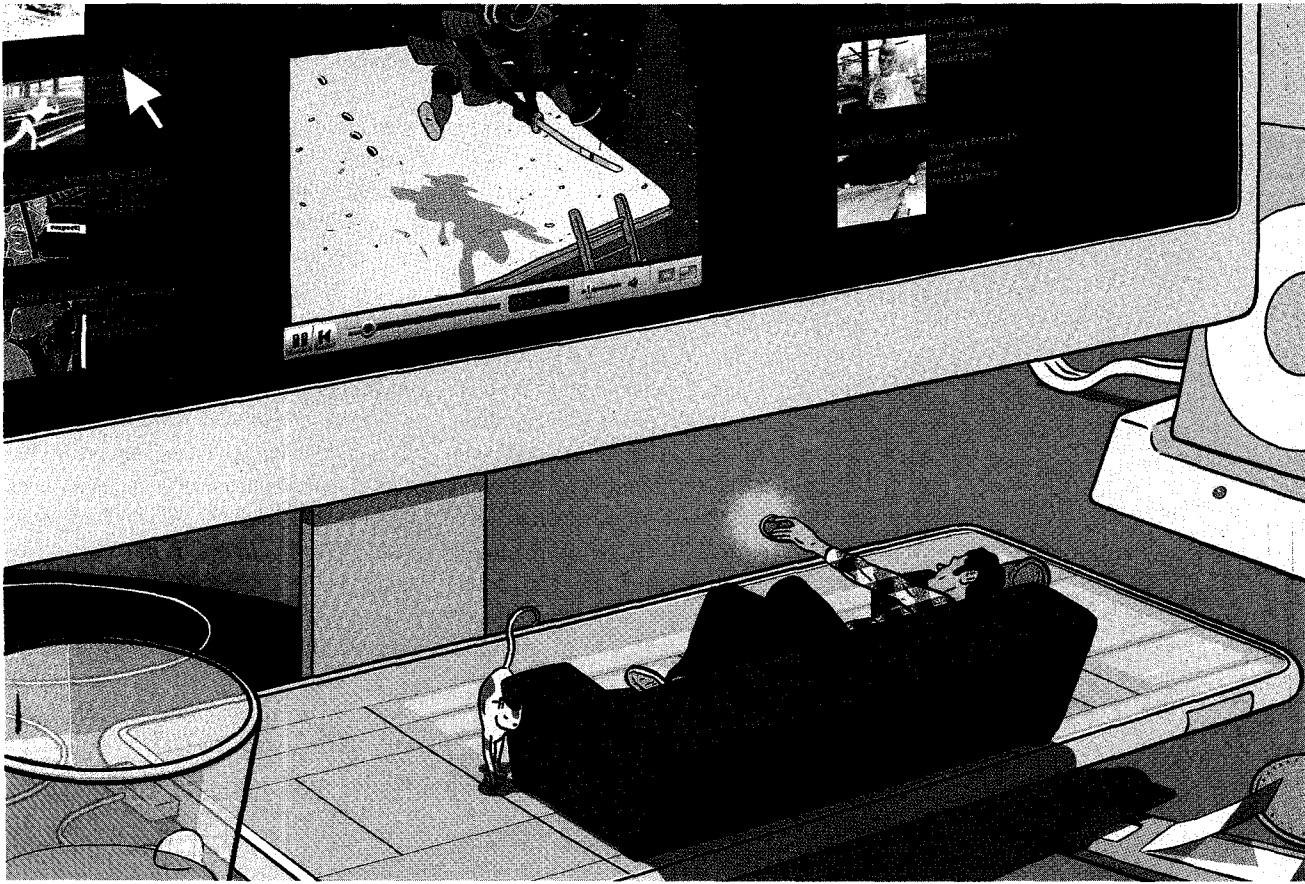
an appealing mahogany color.) Melt the honey into the vinegar either in a small saucepan over a low flame, or in a covered bowl for a minute in the microwave.

In a medium nonstick skillet, heat two tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil over a medium-high flame and sauté the chicken pieces, stirring to brown them lightly and evenly. Add two tablespoons of dry white wine and continue sautéing until the wine evaporates. Then add the honey-vinegar mixture, turn up the heat, and keep the pieces moving until the mixture forms a thick, shiny glaze that coats each one without burning at the bottom of the pan. The mixture will start to thicken after 10 minutes, and the dish should be finished after another five—you want each piece cooked through. The hot little nuggets are chewy and irresistible.

The *Companion's* longest entry on nuts is devoted to walnuts, which Riley describes as "an object of veneration for centuries, associated with the revelries and cults held around the summer

to find. Willinger's recipe, from a cook and innkeeper named Lucia Botte, who lives in the walnut-growing region of Basilicata, uses plain chopped nuts and egg whites (sugar is the third main ingredient). I had to try the recipe as soon as I read it, for the same reason Willinger insisted on watching Botte make the torte: it starts with a technique I'd never seen, cooking whites over a flame with sugar. This is tricky, though less so if you start with very low heat; I had to make the recipe twice before recognizing its virtues. The cake is low and not as delicate as more-laborious tortes. It's as much a nut bread as a cake, and very good with tea. Fresh walnuts are essential for its pleasantly soft and light texture. You can substitute any nicely fresh and soft nuts; pecans would be excellent.

To make the torte, which will serve six to eight, heat the oven to 350° F and place a rack in the middle. Line the bottom of an eight-inch springform pan with a piece of baking parchment or wax paper cut to fit; lightly oil the paper and



CONTENT

TV can avoid the music industry's fate and survive the digital age, but only by beating the Internet at its own game.

The Revolution Will Be Televised

BY MICHAEL HIRSCHORN

One of the most exhausting things about new-media Moonies is their cultish conviction: either you "get it" or you don't. But they're right, up to a point. It's like when you're finding your way around a strange city: you have to see the whole thing in its full conceptual clarity before you can even begin to understand the particulars. The classic case study is how Steve Jobs shanghaied and basically destroyed the CD business. The major record labels, in giving Apple's iTunes the right to sell individual songs for 99 cents each, undermined their own business model—selling bundles

of songs gathered together into something called an "album" for up to \$20 a pop—because they didn't see that people were about to consume music in an entirely new way. The labels saw iTunes as free money; "ancillary," in the legal vernacular. Jobs took their cheap music and used it as a loss leader to sell his expensive iPods, and the traditional music business now lies in tatters.

Since I work in the traditional TV business, I'd been resolutely not seeing how the exact same thing is happening to video. Certainly, I'd been following the rise of Web-based video services like

YouTube, Joost, and Hulu (the latter two being, to different degrees, Big Media-funded attempts to create satisfying experiences roughly analogous to watching TV, except on the Web). More recently, Miro, a nonprofit, launched a high-definition Web channel. And iTunes went video as well, offering a mix of professionally produced video and video podcasts from amateurs and quasi-amateurs. Like the record labels before them, TV networks and studios licensed some of their content to Apple, allowing iTunes to sell shows and movies with the same one-price strategy it had applied to music

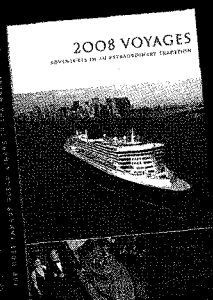


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(\$1.99 for TV shows; \$9.99 for movies). The video iPod, competing with video-enabled cell phones and other viewing devices, allowed visual content to go mobile as well, auguring a period of video everywhere, immediately, all the time. All of this seemed like peripheral noise, digital noodling, because it was obvious: people love TV. They'll never stop watching TV. YouTube is popular, but doesn't count because it's not really TV: it's short-form crap. Produced TV is shinier, more pleasingly narrative. These are eternal values.

A recent visit to Houston, though, convinced me that I just hadn't been getting it. My friend Mike and his wife had done away with their TV entirely and instead had set up their 20-inch iMac wide-screen as the focal point of a kind of jerry-rigged home theater; with no grievous

Sony BRAVIA taking up too much space in your living room. Then, that content will be edited, poked at, commented on, parodied, and rebroadcast by you the former viewer—now “user”—to whomever you choose. Who gets paid by whom to deliver what to whom in this new dispensation is, as in every moment of grand tectonic digital shift, the \$60 billion question.

And it's far from obvious that the people being paid now will be the people being paid a few years from now. The post-World War II model of expensive video driving a massively profitable content-production industry (that now-legendary \$10 million pilot for *Lost*, those \$200 million movies) is in some peril—much as, for the first time, it is conceivable that one or more of the major record labels could go out of business entirely.

Who gets paid by whom to deliver what to whom is, as in every moment of grand tectonic digital shift, the \$60 billion question.

loss in quality, they were feeding it with content from iTunes, various other Web-based media services, and DVDs. In doing so, they had dispensed with those hefty cable bills and had asserted an iconoclastic form of control over their media lives. It turns out, anecdotally at least, that lots of other people are doing the same. And that was my Homer Simpson “D'oh!” moment. Video without a TV console was not only possible, it was likely.

The traditional TV-viewing experience doesn't have to die (for reasons I'll get into later), but to save it, the media-industrial complex will have to act in non-traditional and uncomfortable ways—and will also have to rethink what “TV” is. Currently, it means watching a professionally produced video program—passively—on a television console that is fed with content delivered as part of a subscription to a cable or digital service. In the future, TV will mean a cacophony of professional and amateur short- and long-form content shipped via a variety of platforms to a variety of devices, only one of which is the

Among many other matters, the writers' strike (still ongoing at press time, possibly to be followed by an actors' strike this summer) is a final, great battle royal over content profits at what might be the last moment when such profits are worth fighting over—like steel workers' strikes in the '80s.

The story of digital video is not necessarily going to be the same as that of digital music, though the parallels between Napster and YouTube are fairly uncanny. It's not self-evident that watching long-running movies or TV shows on very small devices will become a mass behavior. According to a recent study, the majority of Internet users watch roughly 3 hours of video on the Web each month, compared to the average person's 4.5 hours of TV each *day*. For all the hype surrounding Web video, it was not surprising that NBC, responsible for 40 percent of iTunes's video sales, had earned only \$15 million last year on those sales, a point NBC Universal's chief, Jeff Zucker,

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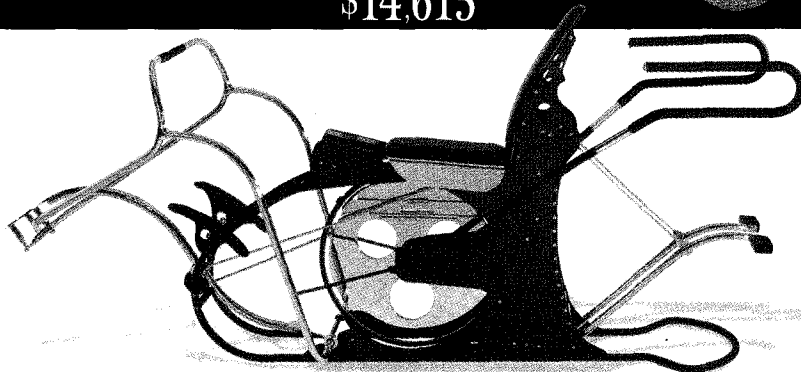
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made (uncontested) in announcing he would pull NBCU shows off iTunes at the end of last year. (This content is mostly going to Hulu.com, NBC's joint venture with Fox, where NBC hopes to sell advertising time much as it does on the air. How this will work better, given the still-unproven Web-video advertising market, remains undetermined.)

The video story is different from the music story in another crucial way. Being a music fan traditionally involved going to the record store (remember those?) or ordering from Amazon and committing a large sum of money to a product you knew about only via one or two songs, and then usually being disappointed by what you got. The iTunes music model, and the illegal-download model, represented a quantum leap in consumer satisfaction over the previous iteration: you could pay for only the songs you wanted (or not pay at all!), and there was a convenient sorting system that meant you could get rid of all those CDs and broken jewel cases. The traditional-TV model is altogether more user-friendly. It's free, or at least the costs are buried in cable bills (where, my Houston friends notwithstanding, years of learned behavior dictate that this is simply a cost to be borne), or they are buried in the more recent "triple play" offerings from Comcast and other companies that bundle cable with phone and high-speed Internet, obscuring the costs even more.

Watching video on the Web, contra-trend, remains more of an analog experience than watching it on TV. On TV, you can click through hundreds of offerings instantly, or choose from dozens more you've recorded on your digital video recorder, and there's a handy electronic program guide to tell you what's on and when. On most Web video sites, however, clicking from show to show involves launching and relaunched players and then sitting through seemingly interminable "pre-roll" ads (and it's almost always the same ad). The quality remains subpar, with poor definition, small player windows, and unsynced audio and video. The selection is spotty, and there is no central guide to what is available where and when. It's easy to say these problems

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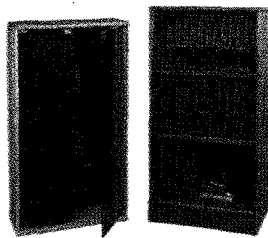
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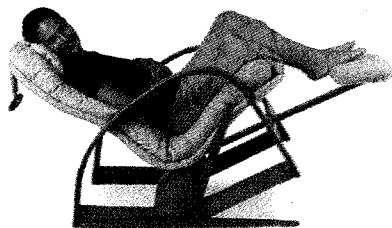
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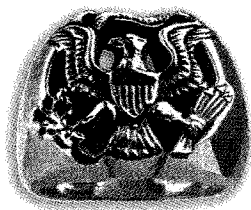


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will be solved, but there's always the suspicion that the experience is intentionally being made unsatisfying so that people don't leave their TV sets too quickly. As Mark Cuban, the not-as-boorish-as-he-appears Internet entrepreneur-cum-Dallas Mavericks owner-cum-reality-TV star, has pointed out, the curve on Web innovation has stalled, even as bandwidth has begun to top out. In other words, only so much data can be thrust through the Internet's distributed nodes, and this structural limitation makes it unlikely that a satisfying, seamless Web-video experience will be on offer anytime soon. For these reasons, with great counterintuitive brio, Cuban last year pronounced the Web "dead and boring."

This is where the problem and opportunity lie for traditional TV. The flip side of the music business's obstinacy is a kind of we-need-to-be-down-with-the-kids type of herd mentality. It dictates that unless you throw everything online, you don't "get it." But "getting it" does not necessarily mean giving in to the braying of the digerati, especially when you will destroy your business in the process. In the past couple of years, the TV networks have thrown their shows onto the Web willy-nilly, some on their own sites, some via AOL, Yahoo, and so forth, and some on new ventures like the aforementioned Hulu. The logic is that if they don't, someone else will; indeed, a dedicated surfer can find most any show through sub-rosa peer-to-peer file-sharing systems that are used by an astonishing proportion of Web surfers, perhaps as much as 70 percent of the total. In the age of distributed media, you give the people what they want when they want it, where they want it. "If they want their show to succeed, they've got to get it out in front of as many people as possible," an analyst for the technology research firm Forrester said of the Big Four broadcast networks, articulating the moment's conventional wisdom and following it with a typical note of alarm: "The window is very short."

But as the music industry learned very quickly (and the newspaper industry before it), this model swiftly turns you

from a business to a charity, undermining the value of your product even as it brings your content to a larger audience. This is because advertisers and broadcasters have yet to settle on a protocol to sell advertising to accompany the near-infinity of available content, and consumers are not yet ready to spend a lot of money paying for downloads. As NBCU's Zucker put it in announcing the end of the network's iTunes deal, "We don't want to replace the dollars we were making in the analog world with pennies on the digital side."

Conveniently, there's a solution, and it's right under the noses of the TV networks: make TV more like the Internet. In his various Web postings, Cuban has been promoting huge innovations coming in high-definition television, including the arrival of full Web functionality in next-generation TV sets and set-top cable boxes. "If the question is 'What's Next,'" he concluded in one, "the answer begins with 'Watch TV.'" Cuban co-owns a high-definition TV network, and may be accused of self-promotion, but I'm inclined to trust him on this one. This means, as Cuban suggested, embracing TV's Webby potential: near-infinite choice, the ability to manipulate and share content, deep and meaningful interactivity around professionally produced content, and a savvier, more "open source" strategy about how nonconventional content is allowed onto and promoted on the big screen. New set-top boxes recently announced separately by Comcast and Netflix suggest a strong push to connect TVs to the Web. Web-enabled TV would likely mean a profound loss of control for TV programmers, as the traditional prerogatives of scheduling became increasingly moot, and with them the meaning of "networks," since most shows would become equally accessible, no matter what network they were affiliated with.

As we move toward a fully on-demand culture (my 6-year-old son literally doesn't understand why I can't replay a song he just heard on the radio), TV does need to follow suit, no matter how fashionable that sounds. But it does not have

to follow suit on the Internet (or at least not *only* on the Internet). There is no reason TV itself cannot compete as Cuban's next-generation version of the Web, offering endless choice (huge stockpiles of movies, entire seasons of TV shows), user editing and sharing capabilities (e.g., sending that *Gossip Girl* clip you just watched to your friend in Cleveland), playback, storage, and WiFi, whatever. And because the data all flow through the same pipes already, but without the destabilizing influence of the Internet, TV can offer brilliant resolution, even on a flat-screen 60-inch set.

A recent article in the trade publication *Multichannel News* warned that technical obstacles still prevent realizing this kind of vision, but serious technical problems bedevil Web video, too: as Cuban has been loudly blogging (the emperor has no clothes!), it's just not satisfying. This means TV has a buffer of a few years to figure out the bandwidth issues, the technical bugaboos, and the business model. But I would sit through ads, and maybe even pay more for cable, if I knew that I had some approximation of a Borgesian library of video content available to me at home—content that I could talk back to, manipulate, and share.

And here's the final twist. As TV and the Internet converge into something generically known as broadband, the distinctions between the two will soon become nugatory from a consumer point of view. But will this resulting hybrid be more like TV, plus interactivity; or more like the Internet, plus TV? The distinction will be worth billions to whoever gets there first and organizes this mess in a fashion that's satisfying for consumers. The networks and cable companies, therefore, will need to move quickly to find a way to package the different streams—professional and user-made, broadcast and Internet—into a huge, interactive library, all easily and pleasantly accessible on demand and portable to whatever device people are overpaying for at that moment.

When they do, they can call it Web 3.0, and everyone will want to get it. ■

Michael Hirschorn is an Atlantic contributing editor.

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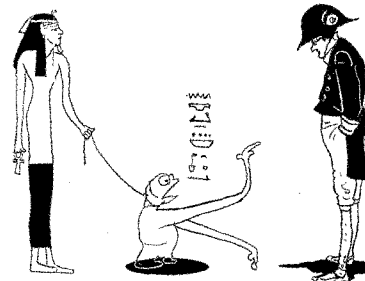
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WORD FUGITIVES

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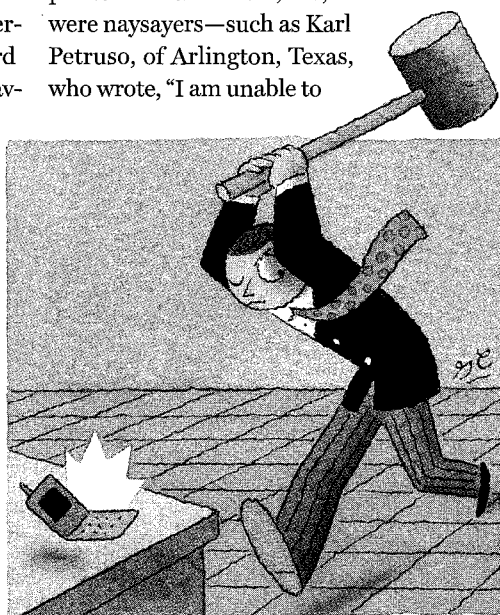
In October, a couple asked for a “polite but meaningful phrase” to convey that they were trying to conceive a child. As usual, a nay-saying contingent weighed in. Becky Heydemann, of Evanston, Ill., for instance, wrote, “The only people who should have any ideas at all about one’s sex life, in regard to children or anything else, are the participants and their immediate families.” Jon-Mark C. Patterson, of Loveland, Colo., was equally but differently critical. He wrote, “There is a word for the condition of married people having sex and being open to the possibility that they will have a baby together. That word is *normal*.”

Also as usual, clever puns and coinages poured in, many of them apt enough if you know what they’re supposed to mean but probably baffling if you don’t. Tom Toce, of New York City, wrote, “I immediately thought of *unionizing*, especially because the goal is, well, organized labor.” Laura Whitman, of Redwood City, Calif., wrote, “In our group when a couple is married and everyone is wondering what their plans are in regard to procreation, we always ask if they are in the *product research* or *product development* phase. *Early product development* refers to your correspondents’ criteria.” Jessie Kimber, of Ecaussinnes, Belgium, wrote, “My husband and I called it *baking*, which is an abbreviated *baby-making* and also hints at the fact that we were trying to put a bun in the oven.”

As for suggestions that were both apt and transparent, Barnabas Sprinkle, of Carrollton, Ga., wrote, “When we shared that we were *mating expectantly*, we received both chuckles and instant understanding.” Joseph S. Santavicca, of

Calabash, N.C., proposed *exercising their stork options*. And Marc L. Greenberg, of Lawrence, Kan., takes top honors for his brainstorm: “This could be a *zygotic episode*, particularly if the parents are crazy in love.”

Also in October, a teacher sought a word for the skill of “rapidly turning off a cell phone that rings at an inappropriate moment.” Here, too, there were naysayers—such as Karl Petruso, of Arlington, Texas, who wrote, “I am unable to



distill this complex phenomenon to one word. Instead, I would offer the following: *Get out of this room. You may return if and when you master the simple courtesy of turning off your phone before you enter my class.*”

Cynthia Mulcahy, of Costa Mesa, Calif., wrote, “As a functional illiterate when it comes to technology, all I know to do is open and then close my cell phone when it needs to be quickly silenced. Being also easily amused, I think of this action as *playing the sile-phone*.” Todd Stockslager, of Raleigh, N.C., argued in

favor of broadening the meaning of *pres-tidigitation*. *Cellerity*, *demobilization*, having *good ringflexes*, and *rapid bye movement* were popular suggestions.

Roger Jasaitis, of West Wardsboro, Vt., takes top honors for a good coinage plus one of the better explanations. He wrote, “While I was attending a Quaker worship service (which is predominantly silent), the Friend sitting next to me had his cell phone ring and scrambled to turn it off.

This action prompted the word *tone-deft* to come to mind. You could say that it was divinely inspired.”

BRENDA BUESCHER, of Chanhassen, Minn., writes, “I’d like a word for my husband’s uncanny ability to ask if I need help with a household task at the exact moment that I am finishing it.” Men who take offense at this request are welcome to submit words for women’s uncanny abilities.

RALPH PROTSIK, of Brookline, Mass., writes, “This fugitive was actually suggested by Dick Cavett in a recent *New York Times* blog posting, but it’s too good not

to forward to you: “The unfortunate telling of a story that one realizes too late is ill-suited to the occasion.”

Send words that meet Brenda Buescher’s or Ralph Protsik’s needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by March 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, More Words That Make a Difference, by Robert and Carol Greenman; and my own Word Fugitives.

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